The Heroic Life of Saint Vincent de Paul

by Henri Lavedan

The Landes

A Troubled Country

Every hour, every minute even, brings change and transformation to this world of ours. There is a constant evolution in nature, in history, in man and all his works, wherein we see, as though it followed some order that must be obeyed, an unending repetition of the process of creation and decay, of destruction and re-birth. And all this we see moving toward a definite end, an end unknown to us but yet inevitable, and at the same time so difficult and so far off as to appear unattainable except in that divine world where alone the perfect and unchanging are to be found. Nature herself, although she seems so unfathomable, shows us striking examples of the profound modifications which, in spite of her apparent uniformity, she herself has brought about in the course of the ages, or to which she submits from those who master her. Savage and inaccessible countries which for centuries have resisted all human progress have given way before this force in nature, a movement as mysterious as a law coming from on high. What an astonishing contrast, for instance, between the North Africa of a century ago and that of today! Yesterday a land of silent, desert wastes – *hic sunt leones* ("here are lions") was the designation of the older maps – now a country dotted with settlements and marked with roads and the caterpillar tracks of the trans-Sahara automobiles!

In every part of the world it is the same story, in France no less, or even more than elsewhere, and especially in those provinces where to a greater or lesser extent are to be seen the differences in race and in customs that are responsible for so many changes, for the making and unmaking of so much local history.

The district of the Landes, which will be taken as the point of departure in this study, offers an excellent example of the working out of these historical variations. This district, despite its natural and peculiar beauty, now somewhat lost, and the fact that geographically it has shown little change, gives today no adequate idea of what it was at the end of the sixteenth century. Indeed at that time the Landes, along with others among the more flourishing provinces, would have presented an appearance hardly recognizable today: disturbed, stormy, racked with fears, torn by perpetual

dissensions.

Under the double curse of religious and civil war, the most hateful passions were aroused. None could escape. Men were caught up by these two forces, which after all were but one, and absorbed even against their will. Stand aside and declare oneself neutral? Quite impossible! "Advance and take the oath," was the never-ceasing cry. "Swear on the Bible or by the Cross, and make your choice quickly. Are you for the Church or for the Reformation, Catholic or Protestant?" There was no middle ground. All must take their stand; otherwise, suspected by both parties, attacked by both and defended by none, the chances of death were doubled.

The very air men breathed was charged with the spirit both of fear and of daring. Behind every door, in the shadow of an arch or a postern gate, in the darkness of cellars, lurked ambuscade and swift death, invisible but certain. A sudden cry, the clash of arms as cloaks were thrown aside, a confusion of curses and shrieks! Along with the gleam of poniard and the report of pistol rang out the name of saint, of captain, of God Himself. Sword sought sword in the reckless hands of masked opponents. And then the quick flight at full speed of horsemen clinging close to the necks of their mounts and leaving behind them in crosses, one body upon the other, the dead of the two factions who mingled their life's blood in a last peace!

In this era of fanaticism and hatred it was not night alone that witnessed these savage encounters; the light of day seemed only to inflame and to incite. It all came to be looked upon as a part of life. The trade of the humble artisan was hardly stopped; after such a torrent had swept a narrow street he went back to his trade behind walls that had just resounded to the crossing of swords and where, though the window-panes were shattered, the trade-sign still swung from its bracket.

This conflict was perhaps accepted as a natural result of life in the cities where people were crowded together and friction resulted from mere contact, where passions were aroused, bringing in their wake the dormant lust for murder and arson. But what were the conditions in the country, where the scarcity of inhabitants seemed to make conflict impossible? Did peace reign there and with it

happiness? No more than in the cities. And why? Because among these people of the country deep and lasting misery existed. Hopeless, almost forgotten by the outer world, they looked helplessly toward the distant horizon, whence they knew none would come to aid them, to bring either bread or alms. Inexorable solitude and a remoteness that crushed the spirit greatly added to the dull hopelessness of their lives and increased their sufferings.

Try to picture what this region of the Landes must have been four hundred years ago, before centuries of construction, of farming, of forestation, of intelligent cultivation and economy, had reclaimed three-quarters of it. The country was dismal, in the first place, because of its barren wastes where vegetation appeared only here and there. Then too, great areas were covered either by stagnant water and marshes, or by vast pools mirroring a universal gloom.

Complete desolation did not, however, cover the whole province. The melancholy aspect I have referred to was characteristic rather of the great district of the marshes that stretch from Cape Breton to Born on the north, and extend laterally from the dunes of the sea-coast to the old frontier of the kingdom of Albret, even as far as the Adour. But south of where the river bounds, or one might say shelters, the Landes, there opened along the left bank a region which, while still retaining its melancholy and somewhat barren character, was even at that time not unpleasant and gave promise that life might be maintained without too great a struggle. Compared with the uncultivated and flat land of the north, this solid and lightly diversified terrain of the south, with its numerous woods, was almost rich.

Here too was a solitude complete and unbroken, but how different from that other solitude with its dead pools and stagnant waters! However paradoxical it may seem, there are solitudes that are instinct with life and that may be brought to conditions of greater beauty and happiness. As the laughing surface of the water conceals in its blue depths the darting fish within; as the bird hides itself in the branches and pours out its song; as even a wild animal, a boar or a fox, for the moment startled, bursts through the dense thicket enveloping it, so places hidden far away, even while retaining their solitary nature, may become alive with intelligence and possess a

soul that reveals and transfigures them.

Men rarely show themselves in such places, as though they fear to intrude. It is only the children who seem at home. They are frank and open and do not conceal themselves. Such are the shepherd boys.

The Shepherd Boy

The boy is not more than seven years old. Although a vigorous child, his back is a trifle twisted and his step heavy. The modeling of his strong, round head with the flat nose, above which dark eyes sparkle, shows a type often found among the illustrations in French histories; the whole face is dominated by an over-shadowing, beetling brow, a veritable rock of firmness and patience.

A faded brown beret is pulled tight over his head as far as his ears, which are remarkably large a characteristic supposed to be found in those who live to extreme old age. For some reason these large ears inspire confidence, curved as they are, like shells, to catch every sound and to retain all that has been heard. For leggings he wears the ancient *trabuch*; a woolen cape with colored stripes hangs from his shoulders; a pouch of stout linen is tied at his waist, and in this he has carefully packed his flute, his knife, three copper pieces, and the little cross of wood he has amused himself by making in idle moments, whistling as he cut. In this pouch he has also placed the cheese and the hard bread that will be his mid-day meal, for it is still morning, a morning in early spring and white with mist.

Little by little as the fog lifts there is revealed a small flock of sheep with its guardian dog, which, tongue out, is already zealously engaged in his duties. The youthful keeper of the flock for a shepherd's crook carries a great forked stick, with which he supports his leisurely steps; for he accommodates his pace to the slow advance of the grazing flock through the dewy heather. He starts, stops, goes forward, seeming only to follow the movement of his sheep, while, in reality, he is guiding them. Slowly, with a gesture or a word, with the touch of his stick, with the mere impulse of his thought, which they seem to divine, he leads them where he will. He knows by instinct where to go, he knows the needs of each ewe and lamb, he loves them all and lives in them; they have been entrusted to him and he must bring them back to the fold unharmed.

The noon hour comes, as he can tell from the position of the sun, and seated on the ground he eats with keen appetite his cheese and

coarse bread. Between mouthfuls he gives a share to the dog, who sits on the ground like his master. The sheep feed about them in a circle without straying; for them, their muzzles close to the earth, life is but perpetual grazing. After the noon-day meal the child, the dog, and the little flock start out again at the same pace, slowly and carefully completing the daily tour. The route is not always the same; yesterday it was the lowland, tomorrow it will be the water's edge or the wood; but whatever its course, always, when evening darkens the earth and takes from the fading sky its last color, the little group, drawn closer together, reaches the familiar point from which the path they themselves have made leads straight home.

His Home

The house is so small and nestles so unpretentiously into its background that from a distance it is not noticed. One steps almost into it before seeing it. It is low and long, built of mud and wood. Between two small windows strongly shuttered the simple door of heavy wood opens directly into the one large room with floor of well-stamped earth; this room is at once kitchen, bed-chamber, and general living room for the family. Facing the door is the great yawning fireplace, blackened by the fires of many winters and crowned by the soot-covered funnel of the chimney. A long solid table occupies the middle of the room and upon it is a platter; about the table are benches and stools. On the walls hang various tools, and resting on the beams are household utensils. The canopy beds stand in the corner, their imposing forms half-covered in the shadow, and, like a skirt lifted by the wind, their canopies of cotton flutter with every current of air. There is nothing else in the room.

But no! We have overlooked something; behind the kitchen and on the other side of the partition a noise may be heard. Are there occupants then of this further room? Yes, and friendly ones too, of great value and even necessity to the household. It is the stable, connected with the main room by a low sliding door. This enables the master to watch over his beasts. Among country people of the best tradition beasts have always been, through long custom, a part of the family and are not to be shut off from the others as though in disgrace. In the evenings, from autumn to the end of winter when all is closed fast against the damp and cold of the season, the whole household gathers around the hearth where the flames endlessly leap and flicker. In the summer when door and windows remain open until dawn, as though in ecstasy before the star-sprinkled sky; when the mother of the swallow brood that nests beneath the roof in the identical spot each year sleeps close to her little ones then the partitions are thrust back and the ox, with head pushed through the opening, utters friendly greeting though not the lusty bellow of the fields; the sheep, too, wish to look in and standing on their hind legs for a moment thrust slim muzzles through the paling without ceasing to munch. This friendliness, this pleasant rapport between man and beast, is closer in severe weather; there are storms during

which the flock may often not reach the fold but remain out all night. It is the winter with its severity, its sudden dusks, its short days and long nights, that gives the greatest charm to the life of the peasant and that is graven deepest in his memory.

His Family

When the boy came back after his day with the flock it was anything but a lonely hearth that he found at home. He thought of its warmth before he arrived. He knew he would be expected, and more than that, eagerly awaited, and his place would be kept for him if he were late. He held always in his heart as vividly as though he actually saw it, the picture of the little group that constituted his whole world, his father and mother, his three brothers, his two sisters. His step quickened as he neared home for the house seemed to him to breathe, the rising smoke was its soul. He entered after having first driven his sheep to their fold under whose ample roof they rested for the night. He saw again the familiar faces that had no more changed since morning than had their surroundings. They sat down at table and ate, speaking but little; they learned from each one, according to his age and the kind of work he did, all the little events of the day: a snake had wriggled from under foot, a thorn had been taken from the dog's paw, a heron had flown past but so high in the sky that one could not see its beak. The family followed these recitals thoughtfully since all such happenings have their importance.

When there was no reason for remaining longer at table they arose, for they never wasted time. At a sign from the father all knelt and joined in the common prayers. The beasts knew that murmur, and, perhaps obscurely feeling its solemnity, drew back, lowering their heads; after the final sign of the cross the sliding doors of the stable were drawn like the closing of the grille in a cloister. The little hanging lamp on the wall, which by its classic shape and flickering light recalled those of the catacombs, was blown out; in the depths of the old beds or on a pallet of corn husks placed on the ground, they all stretched out, each in his own place. How touching is this sleep in common of the whole family, the deep sleep of weariness and peace, a sleep as tranquil as that of children, during which one might almost say that there was a union of their thoughts as well as of their bodies. Wrapped in slumber they continue to ask and to receive, and they dream the prayers that were spoken when the eyes and mind were awake. These same prayers so recently uttered by the sleepers go silently on their way, and when those who

breathed them awaken their prayers have reached heaven.

These de Pauls were far from being examples of the low or impoverished peasantry; they were neither brutal nor coarse. God had spared them extreme poverty and its attendant evils. They possessed that greatest of blessings, a bit of land. They were peasants with modest holdings, to be sure, but they were more respectable and self-reliant than if they had lived in the city. They were without worldly ambition or envy. They might seem superficially to have been unhappy, but in reality they were happy: happy with a little, content with still less, charitable toward all. Their family was noble yes, noble in the highest sense of the word, in ideas and sentiments, and even when more narrowly considered, they showed in the very names of the father and mother a claim to race; "Jean de Paul," "Bertrade de Moras," names with a pedigree. But such thoughts were not for the poor. They were so far from wishing to exploit this little distinction and to call attention to their family, that the head of the family called himself simply Monsieur Vincent. These two words, divested of any semblance of title, were sufficient for his position as tiller of the soil. Monsieur Vincent I This was the name he had hoped to leave, humble but untarnished, to his children. Through his third child, his favorite, this name was to be carried to the four corners of the earth and finally achieve the most exalted rank of all: canonization to endure for all eternity.

In the meantime the boy guarded his father's sheep.

Genevieve, Jeanne d'Arc, Vincent what a pastoral triptych, familiar and yet sublime! Three panels could frame them, but nothing could confine their spirits. It is a subtle relationship, which makes one think, meditate, and dream. Is it not at once inspiring and touching to see three great vocations all beginning with this humble task so close to earth? How important, how inevitable the choice of these three seems, concealed as it was at the time by the divine will! These three apostles would have missed much had they not been shepherds. They surely would have lacked not only the poetic quality though this might detract little from their merit but, much more important, certain elements of their greatness. Without this beginning can we imagine their arriving at such heights? Was it possible?

These are the difficult and interesting questions that arise as we follow the footsteps of the three children tracing essentially the same route, whether in the woods of Lutetia, or of Lorraine, or in the sand wastes of the Landes. Perhaps it is by virtue of the strong contrast that the way of saving men, or souls, or one's country, is learned amid the flocks. At all events it is worth noting that these three models of energy, physical force, and passionate heroism, should have been disciplined in the same school of patience, silence, tranquillity. It may have been this long tranquillity of the shepherd's life that tempered them for the tumult of their existence, for the shock of future conflicts, for the endurance of unnumbered ordeals. What they accomplished is at least a fact, and before it one must bow, or better, kneel.

But as we meditate what seemed contradictory vanishes. Nothing is astonishing. Everything becomes luminously clear.

What Vincent Saw and Heart

It was probably in his sixth year that Vincent, following the custom of the country, began his career as shepherd boy; he cared for his flock until he was twelve, making six years in all that in company with his sheep he lived alone in the open air, far from men.

To be away from men is said to be near God. That would be a splendid education to start with. But how can a small child profit by this beneficent and august companionship; how know that he 'has it? The child does not know it. God alone knows that He is near, very near indeed, to this man who is to be, ever ready to come to him.

Let us study this child and see how he lived in that early, formative period before events began to mark his life. What did he see? Always the same landscape, limited or expanded by the same horizon, over which an ever-varying light and color played according to the march of the season. He watched the tricks of the wind as it twisted the herbage, bent the trees, and drove the fog. Whom did he meet? No one. What did he hear? A bird's song, suddenly stopped, the breaking of a branch, a stone rolling past, the bleating of his sheep, the tinkling of their bells, at times the sound of his own voice, which surprised him. He heard even the soft tread of the sheep in the sand, and above all the impressive murmur of silence in which he believed he heard the sea. Beyond leagues of land and beyond the pools of Soustons, out of sight, lay the sea, the gulf of Gascony. There were no other noises, not even a bark from his dog; why should he bark in this solitude? At the wolves? Certainly there were wolves, but they were deep in the forest and came out only in winter, on nights when the bitter cold drove them forth.

Of what did Vincent think during the slow hours when he had so little to do? It is easy to answer. Through this veil of sights and sounds about him he saw clearly the humble duties of his daily life with the flock and at home; he thought of the fodder at the stable, of the straw for bedding, of herbage, of firewood, of fresh water; he was at pains to remember all that was needed. He thought of his

brothers and sisters, and then the picture of his parents came to his mind; he thought of them with, tenderest veneration, he remembered their admonitions of a day, a month, or even several months ago.

It was of evenings that these parents of his spoke their thoughts often in the winter, when they sat late before a pine fire, quietly talking in low grave voices, for the seriousness of their discussion admitted of no gaiety. There was one inexhaustible subject: the frightful desolation of the kingdom of France, torn by civil and religious wars. They went far back of the deceptive peace of Beaulieu, and spoke of mournful events which they could not forget, retracing endlessly the dolorous history: the Church lacerated and torn apart by Catholics and Protestants, the former in an attempt to preserve and defend, the latter claiming to reform and revive. To attain their ends both resorted to violence and crime. The Huguenots especially bore a heavy responsibility for this.

How many provinces showed the unhealed wounds of this warfare! Beam in particular and that part of Gascony where the de Paul family lived had felt the full fury of these attacks. One crossed oneself in terror at the memory evoked by the mention of Monsieur de Montgomery, who had passed through with his mounted bands, a sinister and diabolical apparition encased in plate armor from head to foot, helmeted in black like the Germans, a black and flame-colored plume sweeping to his saddle; in fact it was the same habit that he wore on the day his angry lance perhaps we should say his traitorous lance was broken in the skull of his King.

"It was about that time, little one," said the father, turning toward Vincent, "that you were born in '76."

"The twenty-fourth of April," added his mother.

They recalled, too, the Holy League and its leader, Monsieur de Guise, and the leader of the opposing Protestant party, Henry of Navarre, famous since the peace of Bergerac and of Fleix. In spite of his religion Henry of Navarre was popular in the south because he was born there and had inherited its traditions. The south was pleased at his marriage with Marguerite of Valois. As they loved him, they made excuses for him, a great tribute to his own unusual

gifts and personal charm, for his followers were guilty of dastardly deeds. In that region his partisans outnumbered all others. They had chosen D'Orthez as a center and from it terrorized and dominated a large section of the country. The reprisals against them increased their wild activities. Farms were burned, cattle driven off or slaughtered, homes outraged, convents pillaged, huts or chapels burned with equally brutal indifference; the Abbey of Sorde was torn down stone by stone. In marble and wood there was made a new set of martyrs, for statues were mutilated and often the eyes were gouged out. Holy-water fonts were either dry or foul with a liquid which stained red both finger and brow. If these ruffians did not happen to break a baptismal font with the blows of their clubs, they might carry it off for use in a pig-sty.

There was peace neither during the week nor on Sundays. Each faction attended religious service armed; one hung the Bible from the scabbard of the sword, the other carried a rosary on the wrist and a dagger in the hand. The singing of vespers might end in the groans of the wounded. The last of the faithful who, trembling and frightened, still dared risk themselves at mass found churches with ruined entrances and shattered statues. These were becoming as headless as Saint Denis, but unlike him they could not hold their heads, for their arms and hands were broken. One stumbled in the grass upon these marble hands; at night women ventured to carry them off as relics. Among all the sanctuaries that had so deeply suffered, intense grief was felt for one in particular. It was the humblest, the least rich, but the most venerated through the ages, the chapel of Notre-Dame de Buglose; this had been from time immemorial a place of pilgrimage for all the population of the Landes and even of the Pyrenees. Nothing whatever remained of the chapel; the Protestants had burned it and with it the miraculous statue of the Virgin, although it was believed by some that the Protestants had stolen and concealed it. This destruction of the chapel and the uncertainty as to the fate of the statue had caused the people to turn to their protectress with a passionate exaltation.

The parents in their long talks thus recounted the evils that beset their country, where men were beaten like grain on a threshing-floor, and yet they recalled too the mercy of God. And thus the evenings passed tranquilly in the de Paul house. Vincent was deeply

impressed with these narratives heard about the fireside, stories told in about the same words and at the same hour, and he listened to them as intently as though he were hearing them for the first time. When he went to bed he dreamed of them, he awoke with memories of them, and he could not shake off the thought of them when he went into the fields and the woods. This continued for six years.

Six years of shepherding, of caring for a little flock of sheep which, while ever changing, had the appearance of being always the same; six years of deep silence, of a solitude unchanging in its sameness! Think what an impulse such a period would give to dreaminess or passivity, to melancholy thoughts, to meditation and questionings. Even in a child, it might tend to put a check upon plans and hopes or half-born desires that struggle for expression. It is at once a world and an abyss; its heights as well as its depths might well cause dizziness. Such an existence stultifies and narrows unless the mind develops and the whole being expands and is inspired. And so the shepherd's life might produce an artist, a musician, a poet, a soldier, a scholar, or a genius; and, even more, a saint.

Thirty Sous

These six years as a shepherd prepared Vincent for his life as a saint six years spent in nature's cloister, open to the sky, where he kept a perpetual retreat. His sheep became for him human beings, and in order to have more to care for he added more in fancy. His solitude gave him the feeling and the liking for crowds. In the silence he heard more clearly the voices that were calling him from far and near. The country opened out into vast and unknown plains and spaces that beckoned to him. The wind that sometimes blew from the sea breathed in his ear "set sail."

These impressions filled him with inspirations, with a sense of dedication, vague as yet, but overwhelming, insistent. When he reflected upon these new impressions, the great, symmetrical pines seemed to promise him the vigor, and the oaks the endurance and long life that he needed. The present filled him with inspiration, the future with hope; through the grace of God he had confidence in himself. In none of this interior ferment, this warmth of sentiment and of aspiration, was he deceived. Neither in his inner nor his exterior life was he disturbed by crises, by any fever of mysticism or supernatural troubles. Grace operated in him in perfect simplicity and order, leaving the child himself unconscious of what was happening. He kept the frankness, the joyousness, and candid serenity belonging to his years. He lost his appetite no more than he lost his sleep. His was the quiet and sure contentment of those who have not only been called but also chosen.

The spectacle of the frightful period in which he was to live, instead of embittering him as it might easily have done, had really made him more compassionate. The wickedness with which he was surrounded made him suffer, but it taught him charity. All that was distasteful to him taught him to forgive. He offered the bread and wine of charity to relieve the distress of those who hungered and thirsted; he clothed the naked. Before his various virtues developed into the garden of sweet odors they were destined to form, he began with one quality that was indeed later to dominate them all and which was the first to blossom and bear fruit charity.

When his father sent him to the mill to get the flour needed for the household it often chanced that he did not bring back the full amount. Had he then been careless and dropped it along the way? Far from it. It was because on the way home he had met an old man, or a poor woman, or a beggar, and had voluntarily given a few handfuls to the unfortunate. And if after that there was not much flour left, those to whom God is generous must themselves be generous in turn. But how did the elder de Paul take this? Admirably, according to Abelly, the biographer of Vincent. "His father, an excellent man, testified that he was not displeased," which in good French and in good Catholic parlance means he was delighted.

Here is a still better example. Vincent by combining labor with strict economy had been able piece by piece to amass a treasure the foot of one of his sheep would have covered it but in his innocence he thought it a huge sum of thirty sous. These thirty sous he carried always with him, and it gave him the greatest joy and pride from time to time to pour them out as he sat on the ground, and count them over, asking himself, "What shall I do with them?" To continue the story, a poor mendicant, who was in fact absolutely destitute, had the good, luck to pass his way. Vincent saw him and was touched; he thereupon gave him his whole fortune of thirty sous, keeping not a penny back. "Take it all," he cried. Then he called his dog, who was beginning to growl, and went his way, poor in his turn but enriched by his charity.

Thirty sous! Thirty, the number of pieces in another purse! But Vincent's are consecrated coins which in the course of centuries will be an inexhaustible fund for succoring the children, women, old men, invalids, prisoners, of a whole race. The thirty sous of the little shepherd became the foundation of the first fund dedicated to social betterment in modern times.

An eighteenth century painting preserved in Paris, first at the chapel of the Sisters of Charity and today in the parlor of the Lazarists, depicts this scene where Vincent by giving all he possesses begins to give back to himself. The unknown painter of the picture has taken certain liberties with his subject. No doubt to honor the saint the more greatly, the landscape is flanked by

mountains toward which the young shepherd of the Landes certainly never led his flock. Still, in spite of its faults and inexactness, one likes the picture. Admired and revered for two hundred years by the Order and by the Sisters, who took its worth for granted, it has gained from their contemplation and from their prayers an increased fidelity to truth that would make us unwilling to see it changed. And so we accept it as a picture painted from life; it is a likeness, it is truthful. It is also the first portrait to be hung in a new and splendid gallery.

It would be wrong to suppose that during Vincent's long hours of solitude he was plunged into a state of religious revery or constant prayer. Without any question he prayed, preferably in the ruined chapel of Buglose where he knelt or sat on the overthrown stones that lay on the ground like tombs. An old oak in the neighborhood, which was still pointed out fifty years ago, was used by him as an oratory. The huge trunk had been so wonderfully split apart that one could believe the God of anchorites had intended it for a rustic cell. Here Vincent set up a little altar. Here he went to shelter himself from the wind, the sun, and the rain. His thoughts, his prayers, his slow walks back and forth, his limited labors which were so inconspicuous as to make him appear indolent or idle, were all directed with spirit and taste toward practical ends. If the ruins of Notre-Dame de Buglose made him pause, it was only out of regret that he could not rebuild them. If he dreamed, it was of action, of good actions. But in what was he to be active? In what way? These questions did not disturb him. And God, when He wished him, knew well how to call him.

The horrors of the earlier wars were not the only subjects of discussion by the parents around the fireside; the troubles attendant upon the round of daily life furnished a plentiful supply. Lying apart from the great centers, one might have expected that even in restless times the outlying provinces would be comparatively tranquil. But the storms that shook these centers had their repercussions in the provinces as well. Religious wars broke out afresh almost before the treaties to bring them to an end had been signed. In 1586 came the plague. In Paris alone thirty thousand

persons died of it. Three-quarters of France was uncultivated and in a state of desolation, abandoned by the peasants, plowed only by war and fertilized by the dead. The planting and sowing was left to the wolves and crows. In the districts near the center of the contest places were taken, retaken, put to the sword and to the flame, starved; their inhabitants were drowned or hanged, no matter which side they took, since victory, constantly shifting, perched on the banners now of one party and now of the other.

Henry of Navarre won at Coutras, Guise at Vimory and at Auneau. Guise, whose splendor drew all eyes toward him, intoxicated with his success, toyed with the project of dethroning the King and arousing the populace against him. Then the King revenged himself upon the States-General by having Guise assassinated in his chateau at Blois, on the very steps of his bed. Guise himself, the head of the League, Monsieur de Guise . . . ! *He would not dare . . . !* His brother hearing his cries ran to his assistance, wearing his cardinal's cross of gold on his breast. And again they dare. "Stab them both!"

The last chapter in the conflict was written less than a year later when a mad monk drove a dagger up to the hilt into the body of the Grand Mignon and ended his reign.

All the world knows the magical way in which news, even of high state secrets, spreads to the remotest country districts no matter how much they are cut off from the outer world. Neither distance nor physical obstacles prove a bar to the passing of information. Is it carried by birds or on the wings of the wind? Or is it twisted about some invisible arrow and shot by an archer from the clouds? It is a great mystery. It falls as from the sky, but it is to be noticed that close to the earth the pedestrian, the traveler, the merchant, the wanderer, the pilgrim, are all journeying on foot and dropping information as they go. They unburden themselves at their various stops and their news arrives simultaneously with that of the messenger who has ridden at a furious gallop and rolls from a spent horse to deliver the same information. Rumor is, indeed, only a vague sound at first, of unknown origin, but gradually it grows more certain and defined, always outspeeding man and his devices, always accomplishing its incredible journeys with ease, leaping

from a palace at one end of the world to a hut at another.

Be sure that in the home of the de Pauls at least the principal events of the world were known and that Vincent heard them himself, not merely through his parents. He not only heard tales but more than once saw a *spadassin* pass by, one of those men, half-soldier, half-bandit, who sold their muskets and swords indifferently to the reformers or to the Church. He had seen marauding cavalrymen clad in gay but tattered uniforms appear and disappear within a day, strings of chickens hanging from their belts. After Coutras he saw the fleeing soldiers of Joyeuse fraternizing with the volunteers of Beam, eager to get home with their loot and turning in the direction of Spain. In midsummer during the torrid quiet of the Landes, a sudden tinkling of bells had announced the approach on their mangy mules of a group of ribald half-clad women, at once the diversion and the scourge of the armies. They came from the mountains and were returning there. At the turn of a path he had met and been questioned by a band of robbers who appeared to have lost their way. Sometimes he saw giant Germans with matted red beards and little wiry men with copper-colored skin and long black hair, who spoke no language that could be understood and who crossed the country making wild threats as they went.

More than once Vincent had seen lame men crouching by the side of a pool, nursing their bleeding feet that had been cut by stones; more than once he had bathed and bound those feet. At one time an empty cradle would come floating down the current of the Adour, at another a broken drum. And he encountered animals once domestic, cats and dogs, that had become wild again; he saw horses that had fallen dead from the convoy, and corpses that had been robbed and stripped so that nothing protected their nakedness from the flies.

He had seen members of religious orders going without fear into the ditches, the plains, the forests, from dawn until night, where, lantern in hand, they sought out the wounded, brought bread, wine, and meat to the starving, and went from hut to hospital to nurse the sick and to place before the dying a bridge of mercy for their last crossing. He had seen, hastening to give aid to the world about them, the notables of Dax and the monks of Orthez, laborers like his

own parents, women young and old, shepherd lads like himself. He had taken part in the religious processions ordered all over the kingdom that the plague of war might be ended. He had been, then, already matured by that experience which in times of distress is the one advantage to be derived from evil. Sober but quick, he spoke little and thought a great deal, as is the habit of those who live alone. He was twelve years old and so tall that he might be taken for a young man.

The Ambition of a Father

Vincent was now so nearly grown that if his father had wished to withdraw him from the herding he could have found work near home for him in the mill or at the heavier tasks about the farm. But the elder de Paul was a thoughtful and discerning head of the house and he had long since made up his mind that his son's life should have a wider field than his. Parents are more ambitious for their children than for themselves. Was it because, with pardonable ambition, he saw that his favorite child had gifts of heart and mind that would make him an honor to the name, or on the contrary because of some presentiment, some secret injunction that he felt was laid upon him, that he had destined him for the Church? Was it perhaps the accomplishment of a vow he had made at this time of the Church's desperate need? In giving up that which he held most dear, was not this good father and good Catholic fulfilling a two-fold duty laid upon him?

It is quite true that the Church offered a life of greater security to the boy and consequent aid to the family; Monsieur Vincent had thought of this and it was natural that he should. A neighbor and friend of his, a peasant like himself, entering the religious life, had become a prior and the revenues from his office had enabled him to bring unexpected aid to his old parents. There might well result in similar circumstances an appreciable advantage to Vincent and his brothers. It is easy from the point of view of the biographer, years later, to see how mistaken the father was. But surely nothing was more natural than that this simple tiller of the soil should dream of high office in Church and State for a son so exceptionally endowed.

As for the educational facilities necessary for a clerical training, there was an embarrassment of riches; there were numerous excellent universities and special schools. In spite of the civil wars many religious orders remained in France and could furnish distinguished teachers, admirably equipped to direct the higher education of young men after they had gone through the parochial schools. In the district of the Landes, the sons of the upper classes went to the Jesuit College; those in more modest circumstances to the Minims or to the Franciscans. It was with the latter that

Monsieur de Paul decided to place his son.

Vincent's entrance into a religious house at Dax was a date of the greatest importance in his life. One would like to penetrate into the feelings of that rare and sensitive child when he learned the great news from his father. Had he expected it, had he longed for it? It matters little. The word, even if it brought no surprise, came to him like a solemn annunciation. His own desires were in accord with those of the Most High.

Farewell to the Country

While Vincent had none of the rather sickly, effeminate sensitiveness that seems so much admired today, we must believe that, despite the joy he felt, his reveries and impressions now took on a tinge of distinct sadness. Men and children are much the same in all times. What a little peasant feels today when he leaves his family, his rustic roof, and the familiar fields, to go to the city and there enter a college or a seminary was much the same that a little shepherd boy would have felt in the reign of Henry III. Their thoughts would run in the same channel, they would have the same emotions.

One can picture Vincent during the last weeks he acted as shepherd, when he knew he was to leave, going his rounds, filled with thoughts that were bitter-sweet. He had in his mind already ceased to be a shepherd, he had already given up the woods; his sheep no longer belonged to him, and yet he loved them and missed them as though they were no longer there before him, eternally cropping the turf. Together with them he made the rounds of the meadow, the wood, the forest with the altar in the oak, all the places where soon another would lead them; his dog, at once more affectionate than ever but more restless, suspected something and went about with drooping head. The time seemed at once long and short but it was slipping away. One by one the days passed. Then came the last.

Tomorrow he must leave. His last evening he stayed out later than usual until dusk began to fall. With the glimmering of the first star he arose and started back. While he was still alone in the fading light he made his gentle farewells to the little flock of seven or eight sheep that were so unconscious of his emotion. It was quickly done. He caressed them, entwined his hands in their thick wool, as the infant Jesus loved to do. The tinkling of the bells at their necks seemed in the semi-darkness a more charming sound than ever. He talked to his shepherd-dog, who listened and understood. He especially commended to his care a big, lazy ewe, and a certain madcap lamb. The dog accepted the charge. Now the two were approaching the house. Vincent stopped short and kissed the warm head of the one who had been his faithful friend since his far-off

babyhood, one with whom he had walked, run, scuffled in the dust, sung, played, waded in the Adour, eaten, drunk, slept and, yes, prayed one who had so often (God will forgive the avowal) consoled him in his days of monotony.

But enough of that. The boy could not spend too much time in regrets. He looked happy when he entered the house where every one awaited him. His parents showed more emotion than he but they tried to make the evening pass like any other. On his hard little bed, which smelt of the stable, he stretched himself out for the last night near his family and the beasts, and slept. A sleep as tranquil as quiet running waters. He awoke in the early morning and hastened to dress. Although his clothes were the same as before, he was now the little scholar, not the shepherd boy. No more need for crook or pouch; they hung from the nail in the wall where they will rest who knows how long?

But there was need of haste. It was time to start. They embraced all around; his mother kissed him; not a tear from any one. "Why should we be unhappy? It is not as though he were going to the ends of the earth, to the Turks, or even to Paris. No, no, it is only to nearby Dax, to the monastery of the good Franciscans, two short miles away, an easy walk. We'll go to see him and he will come home at times at Christmas and Easter. Now, let's start." But what a racket over there! Oh, it was the dog, who barked and scratched, begging to follow, and he couldn't be taken. He too would have liked to enter the monastery. The sheep bleated. It was the most trying moment. At last Vincent went off with his father. They disappeared across the fields as the sun was rising.

The rest is simple and may be imagined. They arrived at the college with its arcades and cloister. The father placed the new-comer in charge of his future masters, perhaps with the Superior. A friendly hand rested on the boy's head and tapped his cheek. Then came the business arrangements: "Sixty livres a year." It is a heavy sum and must be paid in advance. And now behold Vincent, the scholar de Paul, started on his career in the Church to become, if God sees fit to find the hopes of the father not too presumptuous, a prior, perhaps settled in some beautiful cloister, like that neighbor, who was also a peasant. What a dream!

The Franciscan Order of the Cordeliers

The Franciscan order of the Cordeliers is well known. It was established as an order of minor friars by Saint Francis of Assisi in the thirteenth century. They wore the gown of coarse wool, belted by a cord with two heavy knots in it from which they were known as the "corded" Franciscans. At first they were a begging order, living on alms. Later, when given the right to teach, they acquired such a reputation, especially in philosophy and theology, that they were considered equal to the Dominicans, who were thought before to be unrivaled.

It is touching to see this little Vincent, who through a long life was to be a model of Franciscan poverty, humility, and charity, placed at once for his apprenticeship in the house of the sons of the poorest of the poor, of the Poverello himself. Could he have made a better beginning for the career upon which he had so innocently embarked? Where could he have received a discipline more in keeping with the spirit of sacrifice that was to regulate his life?

First of all he must work hard. He had literally everything to learn. Up to this time he, like those about him, had never spoken anything but a dialect derived from low Latin. Grammar and French, literature, ancient and sacred history, geography, a limited amount of science, were all studied. Vincent made such rapid progress as to surprise his teachers both by his aptitude and by the range of his mind; with him everything became clear, easy, harmonious. At times his judgment showed itself so sound and his opinions so shrewd that he might have seemed master rather than pupil. Moreover, without any effort on his part, he had through his intelligence and the sweetness of his character become a leader among the pupils. As his knowledge grew his modesty increased. He tried to ignore his popularity. He seemed not to know what vanity was. His piety welded together his merits and made a crown of them. He was the pride of the school. "Watch Vincent. Imitate him." So spoke the masters to the other pupils.

In four years he had made such progress that the good friars were troubled. "What shall we do with him? Shall he stay with us for a

life time in this limited sphere without going elsewhere to develop his great talents?"

An opportunity soon presented itself to quiet their misgivings and answer their desires.

Monsieur de Commet

Monsieur de Commet, a well-known lawyer practising before the court of Dax and at the same time judge in the parish of Pouy, had need of a tutor for his two young sons; he had heard so much in praise of a certain young student who had just finished his first studies with the Franciscans that he offered this youth the position of tutor in his family. It was flattering as well as useful to Vincent to have such an offer; he accepted it as a piece of good fortune and its duties occupied his life for the next five years. He was treated as a member of the family and was loved by every one in the household. Along with his teaching of the two boys he continued his own studies and never wearied of pushing his knowledge further into the higher fields of thought, although he did not dream that he could master their problems.

In this old and excellent family Vincent was loved, respected, and esteemed at times beyond his wish. It was a family with traditions of office-holding and membership in the lesser nobility, which in those days was closely identified with the provinces and steadied the whole fabric of provincial society, as deep roots hold back the hill-sides where the earth is ready to slip. Such families lived in the well-built houses they had inherited from their forefathers, houses where life was well-ordered, where work and rest both had their proper place, where there was tranquillity and silence. These houses were the centers of good manners and good morals, where life was directed into channels of politeness, reticence, patience, charity all the forms of courtesy and of generosity which make little of faults and smooth out all that causes friction; homes which were admirably maintained without useless luxury and even with strict economy, where the thinking and living were on an equally high plane.

While Vincent refused to accept the pleasures of such a life, his mind was active and practical, and he could not help observing what life was like, lived under such conditions, and how excellent were the results. We may easily believe that it was the sight of a home so well adapted to daily life, where the welfare of every one was wisely and affectionately arranged, that gave him his first ideas

of interior order, economy, and the successful conduct of domestic life, that were afterwards so valuable to him when he began to plan for his foundations.

Both the Franciscan monastery and the Commet home, each in its own way, gave him an ideal of how life in common might be shared and lived.

Saragossa

Four years in college, five in the home of the judge of Pouy, nine since he left the Landes! The son of de Paul is now a young man of twenty-one. He, a young man! It is hard to form a mental picture of him as he must then have been, for he has been always popularized and immortalized as an elderly man with stiff white hair and thick nose, whose keen eyes look out from under a great domed brow and who displays an angelic smile. At twenty-one he must have been a youth of strong frame, with ruddy face, firm cheeks, red lips, a resolute mouth well supplied with teeth, which he was to lose when still young, though he gained thereby an added gentleness of expression.

Vincent's piety was beyond his years, but it was obvious to others that it was leading him always nearer to God. His friends told him as much. He doubted it. Finally they convinced him and he accepted the fact with ardor but without presumption, still fearing, however, that he would disappoint his former masters who had hoped so much for him.

Once he had made up his mind he did not waver. On December twentieth, 1596, he received the tonsure and minor orders; it was the full tonsure and his thick hair was clipped away, but when that hair had fallen still further under the shears of time, the remnant shone like a hidden nimbus under his black cap. The gown, whose roughness pleased him, was not as rough as his former shepherd's dress; with energy he drew the new cord around his waist in later years it had worn a groove there.

The ceremony took place not at Dax but at the collegiate church of Bidachen, near Bayonne. Now that he was enrolled as a soldier of the Church, Vincent decided to dedicate himself wholly to his new service, to leave his family and his country as well. In his heart the separation had already taken place. What path should he choose? He did not yet know. But he was quick to search it out. All the paths leading to that which is good are good. What he wished was to take the one that would lead him most directly to a mastery of theology. In this study he felt he must perfect himself, just as the

soldier must seek his armor and weapons before the battle.

Saragossa, in Spain, first attracted him, and then imperatively called him. The distance was great? True, but it did not dismay him. Were it still greater, he would attempt it. He was so convinced that he was being directed to Saragossa that he sold a yoke of oxen and with the money, which amounted to far more than his former fortune of thirty pennies, he started, on foot, of course.

It should be noted that all his life, however wide the field of his labors or his charities, extending league upon league, he covered it as far as possible upon foot, in the dust. He believed that for him this was the most direct method; by employing it he could stop as he wished, examine, question, listen, discuss. To those he met he could give assistance, offer a helping hand, give food and drink, administer immediate consolation, far more effectively than from a saddle or from the window of a carriage. He knew instinctively that one can not lean far enough from the back of a horse to meet the face of one that stands by the stirrup. Moreover Jesus never went on horseback and did not wish to. No, just an ass and a small one, one that almost allowed His feet to touch the ground, was quite enough for Him. It sufficed for everything: for the stable in Bethlehem, for the flight into Egypt, and for the triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

Vincent started on foot to cross the steep Pyrenees, threading his way along burning, rocky paths. From his point of departure the direct route led by way of Saint-Palais, Mauleon, the pass of Roncevaux, to Pampelune in Navarre, and from there, after other steep ascents, to the arid plains of Aragon. It is probable that Vincent took this route, but although it was the direct route it was long and very arduous. How many times must he have asked of muleteers, of pilgrims, of mountain folk: "The road to Saragossa?"

At last he crossed the Ebro, admiring its limpid stream. As he entered the city he was shaken by an emotion that was both physical and spiritual. His historical imagination was struck by this foreign town whose conflicts, dating back to the Middle Ages, seemed at once to scar and to glorify it. He listened to the guttural accent of the speech of Aragon and thought of the rushing mountain

streams of the Pyrenees. He saw red handkerchiefs twisted turban-wise about heads, blankets thrown over one shoulder and falling in folds until they touched sandals which differed not a whit from a monk's, belts garnished both with crucifix and knife. Gold went with rags, and everywhere in the dark and winding streets were jewels, flags, banners; from every house, pressed against the lattices and looking out unsmilingly, were human faces; wherever one went a repressed fanaticism seemed ready to break out. All this our young priest saw and felt. He pushed further into the city. At sunset he climbed the New Tower; from there his eyes swept the belfries, the cupolas, the dark verdure of the promenades, and the University which he picked out amid the confusion of roofs.

During the following days his excitement died down. He suddenly felt himself lost, an expatriate. After his solitude as a shepherd, after the peaceful and tender family life at Pouy and Dax, what a change! What tumult had broken in upon and stifled his old calm!

He had some understanding of Spain from having lived near her so long. He was prepared for abruptness. It was not the passionate manners nor the readiness of hands to fly to sword hilts that now caused him such sad surprise, but rather the unexpected, and, one might say, brutal, manner in which theology was taught at the University. There, where he hoped to find sobriety, thoughtfulness, and reticence, wisdom, respect for the opinion of others, and a courtesy that would extend to controversial matters, he fell into a welter of bitter disputes, veiled as discussions, where voices rasped, where violence beat in loud words, where there were even shameful gestures of threat and menace.

Divided among themselves the professors would begin with a discussion about "the middle science," the question of predestination, and would end with hands almost in each other's hair. Arguments were emphasized by fists shaken in the faces of opponents. Vincent was filled with horror and disgust; he saw that he had blundered and had come to the wrong place for his studies. However, if he had closed his books and followed only the dictates of his heart, he might have remained in Spain, not to perfect himself in theology, but to study human misery in its most acute form, for, until he reached Spain, Vincent had touched only the

outer surfaces of human suffering.

Spain had been for centuries and still was a realm sunk in poverty and misery. On every side, exposed to the burning sun and the pest of flies, were men suffering from wounds and diseases. Was there not work for him here? The heart of our good young Franciscan was shocked and touched. But with the thoroughness which he brought to all his activities, he discussed in his mind this new question, and decided that, cost what it might, he would not listen to the call of pity.

"Why have I come from so far away to Aragon, to Saragossa? To succor the penniless, to nurse the suffering? No, to master theology, to perfect myself in divine doctrine. For this have I come." Charity could be put off for a little and the poor would not suffer in the end. First of all he must accomplish that for which he had come. Vincent held himself to a strict moral discipline. Without regard to the future, he always felt that his task was the daily task; he might have taken for his motto "I do my day's work." We shall see how he did it. To him, before all the other saints, did the phrase Age quod agis apply.

Moreover in his present difficulty he saw he had been wrong in thinking that he must go to Spain to study theology when he could have done the same thing freely and acceptably in his own country. He returned to Toulouse, where he found the atmosphere suited to his needs, and after seven years of work he obtained his bachelor's diploma according to some, his doctorate.

The price of the yoke of oxen had soon melted away in Saragossa and the money he now received from time to time came from his father, who denied himself actual necessities to send it and who was himself aged and sick. Nor was this money sufficient to cover Vincent's bare needs. He therefore began to give lessons. Pupils flocked to him, and from that time on he was able to support himself so well that he renounced the rights which he had, after his father's death, as eldest son. Having thus completely fulfilled his duty to his mother and his brothers, he could with clear conscience pass on to his career. On the thirteenth of September, 1600, he was ordained priest.

Priest and Shepherd

It has never been determined when and where Vincent said his first mass. It would seem likely that a delicate sense of modesty made him wish not to disclose it. In order to be nearer to God he retired from men. He hid himself in the bosom of nature, in solitude where the sky opened to him and made him lift his eyes. "He was heard to say," writes Abelly, "that at the thought of celebrating the divine mystery he was so seized by terror that he trembled, and not having the courage to celebrate his mass publicly elected to say it in a retired chapel."

Did he think of returning for this occasion to his native province, to the ruins of Notre-Dame de Buglose, or to the shadow of the old oak in whose trunk he had set up his youthful altar? Perhaps. But in spite of the tenderness of such associations, those innocent altars of his childhood were too lowly for the splendor of the great act whose accomplishment so shook him. Near Bazet there arose, if one may thus speak of so modest a sanctuary, the small, isolated chapel of Notre-Dame de Grace. Being at the top of a mountain, it was difficult of access, and stretched low along the ground in the midst of a sheltering wood. The high altitude and the isolation pleased Vincent de Paul.

According to tradition it was there that he offered, for the first time and in the way of his own choice, the holy sacrifice. To assist him he had only one priest and a servant whose presence he could forget. The world was entirely shut out, except for God who was to be henceforth his World. From a distance we may follow him as he walks down the path, which is still pointed out, that he often used in going to this chapel of Notre-Dame de Grace. His next path was to be a much larger and longer one, the great Highway that his destiny had traced for him.

At the very beginning of this amazing career occurs an incident which is linked to other romantic happenings which play around his life; this one has the air of being nothing and yet it can not be passed over, for it shows his reserve as a priest and his modest turning aside from honors.

"I must journey from Toulouse to Bordeaux," he writes somewhat cautiously in a letter, "on business which will require a considerable outlay of money, but whose purpose it would be unwise to state." However, from information gleaned from one of his friends, Monsieur de Saint-Martin, it is certain that this trip was necessary because the Due d'Epernon had summoned Vincent could anything be more incredible? to offer him a bishopric! A bishopric to him, and so soon! What joy, what pride the old father would have felt had he been alive, the old peasant of the Landes, whose dreams for his son had never gone further than possibly a priory. A bishopric!

But there the matter stopped. Without seeking too deeply for the explanation, it is easy to conjecture that Vincent's own refusal was the only reason why the appointment was not made. Happily, it was written already in the Golden Legend that Monsieur Vincent would never be addressed as Monseigneur, that he would never wear the violet of a bishop nor the red of a cardinal, although he might well have attained to them. A bishop's silk stockings for him? Ah, no always gray wool. A simple staff, not the crozier, was to follow after his shepherd's crook; instead of the mitre or the tasseled red hat of the cardinal, he would wear a cap no larger than a porringer and strangely resembling his old beret. Throughout life his thin back would be covered by a girdled cassock and mantle, always black and faded and worn; in this he must walk and shiver and sweat in all weathers until limping and wheezing he came to old age, and then to death, still clad like some sacristan in rusty black.

And now when he saw the way open to a quiet and settled existence, he would seem to have become convinced that he must renounce it. Apparently God wished at once to prepare him for other scenes, to train him for the great adventures which were to follow.

At Sea

Vincent had scarcely returned to Toulouse when business connected with an unexpected and perhaps undesired inheritance called him to Marseilles, fortunately not far away. He arrived there with the serene good humor he carried everywhere. Being entirely disinterested himself, with his usual straightforwardness he quickly finished his business with the gentlemen of the law. As he was preparing to leave in the same way that he came, a man whose acquaintance he had made at the hotel urged him to return with him by boat as far as Narbonne. One would like to know the name of that hotel, perhaps the simplest of inns near the harbor, and still more to know the name of his new acquaintance. Vincent merely calls him "a gentleman from Languedoc." One might venture to picture him the sturdy scion of a Gascon house, a man already turning gray perhaps, engaging, cheerful, sure of himself, talkative, persuasive.

"What weather for sailing, my dear Father blue sky, sunshine, a calm sea, warmth and beauty everywhere, in short, perfect July weather! And see the advantages more pleasure and less expense, a lightning-quick trip, Narbonne the same day you leave!" One can hear now the Midi accent that spiced his words, and see him, this "gentleman of Languedoc," embrace like an old friend the smiling Vincent, who is pleased to accept the invitation.

This pleasant journey by sea required scarcely a day, yet it left such an impression on those who made it and especially on the traveler in whom we are most interested that he felt the need of giving an exact account of it. This he sent to his old patron, Monsieur de Commet, but only two years after the event. Why so long afterward?. The letter itself, with its touching grace and naive power, can best answer that question:

"Just as I was about to return by land, I was persuaded by a gentleman who had been my fellow-lodger to return by boat with him as far as Narbonne, since the weather was fine and I would make the trip more quickly and at less cost than by land, and since there was, in other words, everything to gain and nothing to lose.

The wind was favorable and we should easily have made the fifty leagues to Narbonne, had God not permitted three Turkish brigantines, which were coasting along the gulf of Leon for the purpose of capturing the boats coming from Beaucaire, the seat of one of the finest markets in Christendom, to give chase to us. They attacked us so hotly that two or three on our boat were killed and the rest wounded, including myself, ho received a wound from an arrow which will give me something to remember all the rest of my life; and so we were obliged to surrender to those bandits, more savage than tigers. In their first blind rage they hacked our pilot into a thousand pieces in revenge for the death of one of their own leaders, in addition to the loss of the four or five bandits we had killed. This done, they put us in chains, after having roughly dressed our wounds; they then went on their way pillaging at will, but setting free those who surrendered without resisting, after first robbing them; finally with their ship well loaded after seven or eight days of this they set sail for their lair on the Barbary coast, den of the lawless thieves of the grand Turk. Arrived there, we were exposed for sale with an official report of our capture, which they said had been made from a Spanish vessel; for without this false statement we should have been freed by the consul who is stationed there by our King to keep commerce open for the French.

"Their procedure in regard to our sale was first to strip us, then give each of us a pair of trunks, a vest of linen, with a covering for the head, and then march us through the city of Tunis, whither they had come to sell us. After we had made the circuit of the city five or six times with chains about our necks, they took us back to the boat so that the traders might see which of us could eat and which not, in order to show whether our wounds were mortal. That done, we were taken to the slave market where the buyers came to inspect us, just as they might a horse or an ox which they desired to purchase. They opened our mouths to display our teeth, rapped our sides, probed our wounds, and to show our pace made us trot, run, lift burdens, and even wrestle as a proof of our strength, and many other brutal things.

"I was sold to a fisherman who soon felt constrained to get rid of me because I was such a poor sailor. I was then sold by the fisherman to an elderly man, an alchemist and skillful distiller of essences, a

very kindly and reasonable person who told me he had worked fifty years searching for the philosopher's stone; he had not found the stone but he was very skillful at other forms of transmutation of metals. In witness of which I have often seen him melt together equal parts of silver and of gold, then put thin sheets of this along with a certain powder into a pot or goldsmith's crucible, heat it in the fire for twenty-four hours, then open it and find that the silver had become gold; and, more often still, he would solidify mercury in pure silver which he would sell and give to the poor. My task was to keep the fires burning in ten or twelve furnaces; from this, God be praised, I received as much pleasure as pain. He was very fond of me and was eager to talk to me about alchemy, and even more about the Moslem law, making every effort to attract me to it, promising to share with me both his fortune and his knowledge. God kept in me always a belief in my deliverance, because of the constant prayers that I offered up to him and to the Virgin Mary, through whose intercession I firmly believe I was delivered.

"I was, then, with this old alchemist from the month of September, 1605, until August of the following year, when he was summoned by the great Sultan to work for him; it was useless, however, for he died of grief on the journey. He left me to his nephew who sold me immediately after the death of his uncle, because he had heard it said that Monsieur de Breve, the Ambassador of our King in Turkey, was coming with express powers granted by the Grand Turk to free Christian slaves.

"A renegade Catholic from Nice, in Savoy, a disgrace to our humanity, bought me and took me to the farm he held on lease' from the Sultan, for in this country the people own nothing, everything belonging to the Sultan. The estate of this man was in the hills, where it is extremely hot and dry. One of his three wives was a Greek Christian but schismatic; she had a noble character and became very much attached to me; and then later, another of these, who was a Turkish woman by birth, served as an instrument of grace in converting her husband from apostasy, putting him into communion with the Church and delivering me from my slavery. She was curious to know how my countrymen lived and came each day to see me in the fields where I dug, and after the talk would tell me to sing praises to my God. The remembrance of *quomodo*

cantabimus in terra aliena [How shall we sing in a strange land?] of the Children of Israel, captive in Babylon, made me begin with tears in my eyes the psalm *Super flumina Babilonis* [By the rivers of Babylon], and then the *Salve Regina* and many others in which she took great pleasure. She did not fail to say to her husband in the evenings that he had done wrong to give up his religion, that she held this religion in high esteem because of a talk I had given her on the subject of God and because of several hymns of praise that I had sung in her presence, from which praises she had received such divine pleasure that she was sure that the paradise of her fathers, in which she had once believed, was not so glorious nor accompanied by such joy as she had felt while I praised my God, concluding that in it there was something marvelous. This 'Balaam's ass' was responsible by her discourses for her husband's telling me the next day that he only awaited a convenient opportunity to effect our escape to France; that he would there make such reparation in a short time as would redound to the glory of God.

"This short time proved to be months, during which he merely repeated his promises; in the end however he fulfilled my hopes and we escaped in a little skiff. On the twenty-eighth of June we reached Aiguesmortes and Avignon soon after; here Monseigneur, the vice-legate, with tears in his eyes and a sob in his throat, publicly welcomed the penitent apostate in the church of Saint Peter, to the honor of God and the edification of the spectators. The aforesaid official retained us both in order to conduct us to Rome whither he intended going as soon as his successor should arrive; for his triennium, his three-year term of office, would end on Saint John's day. He promised the penitent that he should be entered in the Fate ben fratelli, a very strict monastery, where he took his vows; and as to me, he would find me some good position."

How can one after reading this amazing and charming letter do anything but re-read it and inhale from it its sweet perfume of modesty, simplicity, reserve, and gentle wit. It expresses resignation, grace, even a delicate malice. It is written in the sturdy, pungent French of Montaigne. One catches in certain phrases such as "the people own nothing, everything belongs to the Sultan," a suggestion of the Persian Letters, although this anticipates them by

a hundred years. And then all this scenario of the gentleman from Languedoc, and brigantines, alchemists, apostates, slavery, conversion if it were mere invention, what diverting and irreverent turquerie after the manner of Voltaire might it not inspire?

But this is not a question of amusing narrative or of tales from *The Arabian Nights*. We are on a higher plane than Aladdin and his lamp. The lamp which here lights us is the only truly magic one, the only one that will never be extinguished. It is rather a question of moral values, of 'the rare and noble qualities of Vincent. His letter exhibits them all and isolates them so that they can be seen. This letter is the introduction to his works and to his future labors. He has finished the apprenticeship needed for his works of charity. His apostolate is foreshadowed in it in all its future amplitude. In the course of that long captivity he had been forced to accept suffering and wounds, chains, servitude under various masters, and to go from the terrific heat of the alchemist's furnaces to that of the burning sun under which he must dig in the earth, carry burdens, and in spite of his exhaustion find the strength to sing hymns for the wife of his master! It was in this school of obscure and resigned suffering that he learned to recognize the anguish of a whole world and conceived a plan for its assuagement.

Vincent's own experience as a slave drew him toward other slaves, toward all slaves, those of the cities and those of the deserts. The first time he ever saw galley-slaves he felt that it was not a new sensation; he said to himself, "I was one of them." He had worn irons on his neck and on his legs; he knew their weight and their roughness. He therefore made himself the protector and the friend of the galley-slaves and even of those Turks, "fiercer than tigers," who had run him down at sea that fine day in July when he sailed tranquil and happy toward Narbonne.

The more we study the pages of this letter, so restrained in style but so filled with dramatic narrative, the deeper grows our wonder. The writer is neither enraged at his fate nor filled with pity for himself. A tone of quiet confidence runs through the letter. He submits to his fate; he is not crushed by it. He recognizes in it the hand of God, who permitted these three brigantines of the devil to pursue them. He mentions himself as little as possible, and only when it is

unavoidable; he then slips into the narrative quickly, and as quickly leaves, in a little flash of humor which adds to the casualness of his being there at all: "I who received a wound from an arrow which will give me something to think about all the rest of my life!" How little he makes of himself in the narrative! He would seem almost apologetic for having been wounded!

It does not take strong imagination to picture the scene of the sea-fight as a horrible conflict, a carnage in fact. On each side there were dead and wounded. The pilot was hacked to pieces. The boats on both sides ran blood, the bare feet of the sailors slipping in it; the very water itself around the ships was reddened. Vincent, however, does not color the picture for us. He tells what happened with precision and with great fairness. When it is possible he says a kind word for the enemy even though that enemy is barbarous: "setting free those who surrendered without resistance." He does not curse them nor does he call down divine punishment upon them. His captors put their filthy fingers in his mouth and twist his tongue to see his teeth and thrust their fingers into his sides, but he expresses no anger, no disgust, and when these same fingers with nails like a beast's are thrust into his wound to fathom it, he utters no plaint, shows no wrath at the indignities; he dismisses them under the general name of "brutalities." When he says that his first master, a fisherman, got rid of him "because I was such a poor sailor," has he not really the air of confessing that it was certainly his own fault that he was so poor a seaman? One notices how happy Vincent is when he can find a kind word to say of his masters to whom he tried to be a faithful servitor. His alchemist is a "skillful distiller of essences," in spite of his dozen furnaces and his frenzied search for the philosopher's stone, and shows a high regard for Vincent, being touchingly generous in his offer to him. Of his last master, "the renegade from Nice, in Savoy," Vincent speaks with great moderation even before suspecting that he would have the joy of converting him. Between this master, this "enemy of nature and the three wives he possessed," and a young man of twenty-nine living within the household, a thorny situation might have evolved. However, Vincent surmounts the perils and in the purity of his heart is not afraid to say that he soon won the sympathy of the Greek schismatic wife "who had a noble character and became very much attached to me." As for the Turkish wife, it is almost a miracle

that Vincent touched her heart so deeply that, at first converted in secret, she later was so firm in her faith that she urged her husband to return to the bosom of the Church and to recognize in the admirable man who was his slave a messenger of God, more worthy of being master than slave, a man who must be speedily delivered from his servitude.

The whole scene is very touching. The Turkish wife is pushed on by an irresistible force: one day, veiled, hidden perhaps, she reaches the sun-baked fields where Vincent, all alone, his face dripping sweat, bends over his spade; she watches him, while he himself seems not to be aware of her presence. Suddenly this neophyte, whose heart God's grace has pierced like an arrow, commands Vincent to "sing praises to his God." He drops his spade, extends his arms so that he becomes the figure of a cross, and with cheeks bathed with tears intones the *Super flumina* in a trembling voice. The Turkish woman, already a Christian, weeping, kneels at his feet and sobs for joy. Around them the silence of Africa, above them a sky as blue as the mantle of the Virgin; their spirits are almost liberated from their bodies, earth has slipped away from them. What could be more beautiful!

Vincent will find fixed in his memory for life and for eternity these supernatural moments.

Among Important People

Rome

One might well think that when this history of Vincent's capitivity reached Monsieur de Commet and became known it created a sensation, and that the fortitude with which he endured his trials must have greatly increased the admiration already felt for him. But nothing of the sort happened. The letter was known only within the most restricted circle, no doubt at Vincent's request. The judge of Pouy kept the secret and died without revealing it.

Vincent's letter was found among the papers of Monsieur de Commet by a gentleman of Acqs (Dax), the nephew of the Monsieur de Saint-Martin, whose friendship with Vincent we have mentioned earlier in this narrative. Astonished and delighted with his find the nephew, who knew the close friendship between Monsieur de Saint-Martin and Vincent, sent the letter to his uncle. Monsieur de Saint-Martin thinking, quite naturally, that Vincent might have forgotten some of the incidents of this early adventure and that he would be pleased at having the details recalled to him, sent an exact copy of the letter to him.

But how often, when we feel that we understand men, that we know their weakness and their strength, their vices and their virtues, we find ourselves deceived! This is all the more true in the case of superior natures that have a touch of the sublime in them. For a quarter of a century this great servant of God had been firm in avoiding anything which would draw attention to him, excite the public's curiosity, or attract even praise and kind words. Vincent had reached a point in his peaceful life where the abrupt communication from Monsieur de Saint-Martin could only trouble him. So far from giving him pleasure, it evoked positive pain in recalling a chapter in his life which he had hoped would remain forever concealed, unknown to others, even as he had all but forgotten it himself.

Were it not a word impossible to apply to this model of patience and sweetness, we should be tempted to say that the re-appearance of the letter made Vincent angry for just a few moments! He threw in the fire this copy of his imprudent letter of early days as if, like

something diabolical, it burned his fingers. He wrote instantly to Monsieur de Saint-Martin directing him no, he was too courteous to use that word imploring him to return the original. His friend divined at once that Vincent wished it back in order to destroy it and desiring to save a valuable document that dealt with the life of a saintly man Monsieur de Saint-Martin was deaf to the request. Again and again Vincent wrote for the return of the letter and in one last effort made so passionate an appeal that it was impossible to refuse his request. "By the bowels of Jesus Christ," he wrote, "by all the graces it has pleased God to shower upon you, 1 implore you to return to me that wretched letter in which I mention Turkey"

This occurred six months before Vincent's death when he was feeble and old, already paralyzed, and at the end of his strength. He no longer wrote but dictated his letters. One of his biographers tells us that the friar who acted as his scribe shrewdly guessed that if Vincent so profoundly desired the return of a letter, that letter must contain something in praise of himself which he was eager to get back and destroy. So the friar slipped in with his letter a note in which he begged Monsieur de Saint-Martin to place the precious document in the hands of some one else if he did not wish it irrevocably lost.

Monsieur de Saint-Martin was quite ready to acquiesce in this for he was convinced that one might, indeed one should, disregard the appeal of a friend when it was a question of recording the graces that God had granted to that friend. This precious letter, the object of such conflicting desires, Monsieur de Saint-Martin sent to the Superior of the Seminary established at the College of the Bons-Enfants. It is only as a result of this friendly duplicity that we have full and definite information concerning the slavery of Vincent de Paul and the astonishing episode that released him from his shackles.

Indeed, in the official report of the beatification of Vincent de Paul mention is made of only one person who had ever heard of his captivity. Monsieur Daulier, the secretary of the King, who did know the whole history, formally stated that he had many times attempted to lead Vincent to some mention of Tunis and the Christian slaves of that region, but he had never been able to draw

from 'him a word that would make any one suspect the country was known to him.

But it is time to rejoin our liberated slave at Rome, where we left him. To escape "in a little skiff" and then, after briefly putting in at Aiguesmortes and Avignon, to land at Rome, the Eternal City, the great port of Christianity what a piece of fortune for such a one as Vincent!

The Rome that was ceremonial, splendid, embellished by the munificence of popes, Vincent saw and admired without being overpowered by it. He gazed at the master-pieces of antiquity and the wonders that successive civilizations have added since, as they will continue to do in the future; he gave these things a just admiration but they did not stir his heart. Once for all he accepted them, but when he left them he lifted his eyes to higher things by the very act of lowering them, by looking down into the soil of the martyrs, where his feet sought the print of theirs; from this he gained peace and an austere joy. All of his interest was in this aspect of Rome, his thought brought him here, and here he lingered. He visited the churches (the visitor to Rome knows their number) throughout long days and recited litanies of thanksgiving. Even in the churches it was not the treasures guarded in sacristies that attracted him. For in Rome he again came closer to the earth; he went into crypts. He preferred those tombs which were not marble, where the ashes were free from all pomp. Many times, from morning until evening, the catacombs enclosed him within their shroud of stone, their windings were his garden, their tiny lamps his starry sky. His hands, his lips, his knees knew the humble altars, the vestibules where weeds grew, the steps that martyrs had trod.

The most resplendent palace did not cause Vincent to turn his head. His museums were the chapels. He did not seek out the residences of the great nor the princes of the Church. The antechambers that saw him were the wards of hospitals. In every poor man he saw a possible saint. If he went outside the walls it was to contemplate and the better admire from a distance that capital of the world, august yet gentle, upon whose precious relics he meditated as he gazed across the Roman campagna.

Above all he pursued his studies. What did he expect? You recall the words with which his famous letter ended: a good position. Certainly he was frank about it; he said it in a straight-forward way; he counted on it. He should be applauded for his forthright thought and speech. He was burdened with debts, he had nothing to live upon, and he was determined first of all to be self-supporting; otherwise how could he be independent and fulfil his apostolate? He could hope for a "good position" quite without selfishness, for he knew that his neighbor would profit by it far more than he. The papal legate, Montorio, had promised to help him and he very quietly depended upon the friendship and influence of this prelate.

But it would seem that God thought this exceptional servant of His quite above the promotions that are the beginnings of the ordinary great careers. Legate though he was Montorio could not obtain what he requested for his young friend. Far from being cast down by this Vincent was so little disturbed that he saw the divine will in it and believed that the favor he was to receive through the legate was, in fact, exactly this check.

The check reflected honor both on the legate and on his protege, since its cause was the high praise which that official bestowed upon Vincent. He knew his young friend intimately for Vincent lodged, ate, and lived with him, and this intimacy developed, on the legate's part, such an admiration for his young guest that when he came to express it to others he defeated his own end by overemphasizing it.

Two Gascons

Although in 1608 Henry IV had every expectation of a long reign, he nevertheless lost no time in pushing his ambitious plans for a general realignment of the European powers. This was to check the growing influence of the house of Austria. Henry saw very clearly that if the Pope, Paul V, consented to join his league, it would be a matter of the first importance, since it would bring into the alliance all the other Italian powers, in addition to the states of the Duke of Savoy, the Grand-Duke of Tuscany, and Venice, on which he already counted. With this in view Henry kept many ambassadors busy in attendance on the Pope.

These able ambassadors were at that moment looking for some one to act as a liaison agent between themselves and the King in whom they could have complete confidence. They had heard the vice-legate praise his protege; perhaps he was the man they were looking for. They arranged a meeting and were so pleased with Vincent that they charged him with an important mission to Henry IV, it being understood that they considered him well equipped to discuss the question and to advise the King as often as there should be need of him. Vincent arrived at Paris in 1609.

We are not surprised to find ourselves now before closed doors. Historians may deduce with reasonable accuracy the main reasons for Vincent's being sent to France, but the exact nature of the questions discussed between the King and his envoy remains a secret. Was there only one meeting between them, or perhaps, several? The subject was important enough to warrant more than one. Whatever the number we regret that we can not sketch their character nor their results. Henry IV was fifty-six, Vincent thirty-three. Despite the twenty-three years difference in age they understood each other perfectly, we may be sure, as soon as they met, and in few words. The seriousness of the subject did not prevent their native wit from breaking through and enlivening the discussion. The two speakers were natives of the same soil, for Beam and the Landes are twin provinces and lie close together. The master of France and the man of God were equal in finesse and had an equal ardor for the public good, a similar breadth of view. They

spoke with the same accent and in a broader sense they spoke the same language.

We can picture them quite clearly as they faced each other across the table: the man from Beam without doubt invited the traveler, his guest, who had come from so far, to drain a goblet of ruby Jurangon with him. Cordial and colorful, with quick gestures and flushed cheek, the ruler spoke, explained, laughed, ran his fingers through his curly beard. His guest listened attentively, understood in a flash, answered with a smile of such comprehension as made a friend of the King at once. The interview continued, time passed.

Meanwhile in the great ante-chamber the gentlemen of the court began to wonder. Opinions and fears flew fast in the Louvre. In windows, in alcoves, courtiers asked each other in low tones, "What is keeping His Majesty so long? Can it be that swarthy, unknown priest whom one can half see back of the curtain?" Already brows were knitted under the shadow of a new fear; was there here an unknown influence to reckon with? Outwardly they scoffed at the idea: "It's nobody. An obscure little Franciscan from the provinces from Gascony quite unknown. As for his name, why, Vincent. Vincent somebody-or-other; I forget who; it doesn't matter."

Ah, yes! be reassured, my dear sirs; truly this man will never disturb you. He will not try to withdraw the King from you nor quench his vivacity. He has other aims. But wait, the audience is over and he goes out as poor as when he came in, carrying in the pouch under his cloak not even the shadow of a promise. If the King has offered him any preferment he has declined it. As he goes out, he bows. Do not fear that he will come again soon to the King's chamber; it will be a very long time before that happens. But quickly return his parting salute, for he is a more important personage than Sully, Bassompierre, or Crillon; this is the Ambassador o God, the future minister of the poor.

Accused of Theft, He Turns the Other Cheek

Vincent had glanced at the court and, with fear in his heart, fled from it. The warm reception that Henry IV doubtless gave him he could not forget. He loved and respected in the King the paternal monarch, the honest man as well as the politician skilled in affairs both of church and of state. However, his mission once completed, Vincent had but one idea, to beat a quick retreat; he was ambitious only in the realm of piety. A tiny lodging, hidden modestly away in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, very near the Charity Hospital, was just what he wished; he settled down there. He would indeed have been astonished, as he hid himself in the shadow of this hospital, to know that he was to be the founder of an order of devoted women who, under the name of Charity, would spread his glory to the world.

The obscure beginning of his work glows with the same warmth that will color its perfected success. He arranged a program as simple as it was complete. He visited the sick, he exhorted them, he stayed by and sustained them at the threshold of death, when they had no other support but his arms; he gave to the poor what aid they needed, nourishment both for the body and for the soul; he turned to the soul after he had dressed the wounds of the body. His vocation now swept him along at full tide. But that was not all. His happiness was crowned by the friendship that was beginning with Monsieur de Berulle, a priest who was a model of sacerdotal perfection. The two men were of about the same age and were drawn to each other by a spiritual affinity that nothing could destroy. Vincent, ever himself pouring out consolation for others, needed on his own part a spiritual friend and guide. Where could he have found one more perfect than this companion of the great Francis de Sales? Nothing more was needed for his complete happiness. Perhaps he was too happy.

It often seems that the most simple and innocent happiness is denied those who most deserve it, and it is almost always denied to those whom God has marked out for holiness. Such elect ones reject

peace, they scorn comfort, either for body or for mind. A saint who had no trials, no vexations, no physical nor mental torments, who, under tribulation, smarting from injustice, and frankly pitying himself, should cry, "My God, Thou givest me not the peace and quiet in which to do Thy will, as I should wish" that saint would no longer be one, for by that mark he would lose the title to which he aspired. Saints are destined to be harassed and to suffer in proportion to the heights of holiness to which God means to lift them. From this point of view it will be seen shortly that Vincent was to be highly favored.

From motives of economy, doubtless, Vincent shared his room with a man from his own province, the judge at Sore, a small place in the neighborhood of Pouy. This judge put his money in a closet which was kept closed and which he never failed to lock when he went out, taking the key with him. This was only prudent, for even in those distant times it was not well to leave money in Paris unprotected, with the door open. One morning on leaving, the judge forgot to take the key. That day Vincent was sick and remained in bed awaiting some medicine that was to be brought him. The messenger arrived with it. He asked for a glass, he must have one; he then began to look about and in his search opened the door of the closet, beheld the money, coveted it, and made way with it, without disturbing the sick man who lay in bed with his back turned. The medicine was administered and the rogue went off with the air of one "well pleased with himself." Four hundred ecus was the sum stolen, so that the amount of this hidden treasure was considerable.

When the judge returned and missed his purse he was so overcome that he nearly fainted; he questioned Vincent at first sharply, and then angrily demanded the money. Vincent replied that he had seen no one take the money and that he himself was certainly not guilty. The judge was so upset by his loss that he could not conceal the fact that he suspected Vincent. Since the latter could not refute the accusation he was silent. Then the judge flatly accused him of the theft; he thought his companion's silence and embarrassment proof of his guilt. He ordered Vincent out of the house. Almost any one else would have resisted, but Vincent went meekly as though his guilt left him no alternative. Not even at this price, however, did he

obtain peace; the outraged judge was relentless and carried the story even to Monsieur de Berulle, to whom he denounced Vincent as a rogue.

For a moment Monsieur de Berulle may have laughed, but his amusement ended in deep grief when he saw his innocent friend the victim of a scandalous but serious accusation. He suffered more than the one against whom the charge was made.

Although the affair caused a "terrible stir" Vincent de Paul said not one word, nor gave any hint of being annoyed by it; his serenity was unruffled and we have proof of it in a direct statement made in his own fashion.

Since it was useless to attempt to hush this matter up, as he tried to conceal the story of his captivity, he resigned himself to taking it up later and he approached it with the modesty he always exhibited when he had to speak of himself. He tells it as though it had happened to another: "I knew once a person who, when accused by his companion of having stolen money from him, replied gently that he had not taken it. But when he saw that his companion persisted in the accusation, he turned the other cheek, lifted up his soul to God, and said 'What, my God, shall I do? Thou knowest the truth?' Then having confidence in God, he resolved to make no answer to his accusers, who went to great lengths, even drawing up a charge of theft against him."

We can not reflect upon these lines without observing the fund of admirable and pious wisdom lying at the bottom of Vincent's character. He had "inspired good sense." All his life he will follow the rule traced here. Whenever he encounters a human obstacle, great or small, he "will turn the other cheek." And in return for this he will, even if long afterward when he has despaired of success, gain his just cause and be rewarded far beyond his hopes.

This was the case with the present affair and he tells us the results: "But it happened, God being willing, that after six years he who had lost the money found, more than a hundred leagues from here, the thief who had stolen his money. The thief lived in Bordeaux, as did the man he had robbed, and had been put in prison for a new crime. He recognized the judge of Sore at once and knew that it was

from him he had long before stolen the purse. Filled with remorse, he called the judge to his cell and confessed the theft."

The judge, overcome with horror at the thought of his own false accusation, wrote a long letter to Vincent in which he implored forgiveness, adding *that were it withheld he would go in person to Paris and with a cord around his neck throw himself at the feet of Vincent*. Such repentance was quite enough for Vincent. He freely forgave the judge and made unnecessary the latter's presence in Paris or the dramatic scene he had suggested.

The enlightenment of the judge did not, we must remember, occur until six years after the theft itself. We must go back to the time when the slandered man, despite his angelic submission, was nevertheless wounded by the episode and quite determined not to run another such risk, but to live a life more withdrawn than ever. He thought, however, when he reached Paris that he had taken ample precautions. His family name, which we continue to give him, he had at once dropped on coming to the city, as being too pretentious; he used only his Christian name and during his life-time it was the only one by which he was known. He said not a word to the circle around him to reveal the keenness of his mind, the extent of his learning, or the degrees he had received. If questioned, he passed himself of! as a poor scholar who knew scarcely the elements of grammar. To be obscure delighted him. He spoke of himself as "the least of men."

It would be at once too splendid and too unjust if these superior beings were able to conceal themselves from us by such subterfuges. Saints feel this deep desire for self-effacement, but those who practice it are not always allowed the chance to persist in it. Man may not choose what he shall sacrifice for God. It is God who chooses for him and who knows better than he. Moreover it often happens that the most carefully thought-out plans of human beings have the opposite effect from that intended. Extreme discretion often leads to indiscretion. Attempt to hide your existence and you will find that the good and the evil-minded will be equally eager to find out what you are concealing.

In the Palace of Queen Margot

In the Faubourg Saint-Germain, where Vincent went to hide himself from the world, stood, some little distance from his lodgings, the residence of Queen Marguerite. Surrounded by gardens and terraces that sloped to the edge of the Seine, it occupied a vast plot where today the Rue de Seine begins. At number six on that street, at the back of the court, one may still see a part of the splendid and beautiful building that was occupied by the daughter of Henry II after she left the throne of France. When Vincent went to live in this quarter the residence of his illustrious neighbor must have been known to him, but it concerned him very little. What likelihood was there that there should be the slightest connection between one who was yesterday a queen and who was now the mistress of such a palace, and a poor, shabby priest, hidden away in his garret? Did she know that Vincent even existed? Who would have spoken to her of him? "Unless, perhaps, the King," he thought once half-fearfully; "the King who formerly received me." But he reassured himself. The very reasons that made the secret conference necessary would in themselves have prevented the King from sharing such political matters with his indiscreet former wife. He saw her from time to time but at rare intervals. He need have no uneasiness on that score.

But no matter how passionately one attempts to live apart from the world it is difficult not to make human contacts. Vincent, quite by chance, and with no suspicion of what it would later lead to, formed a friendship with a Monsieur Dufresne, a devout and honorable man who seemed quite worthy of confidence; this gentleman proved to be the private secretary of Queen Marguerite. Did Vincent know this from the first days of their acquaintanceship or did he learn of it only later? We can not say, nor does it matter. Monsieur Dufresne was at once struck by the rare character of the priest and he spoke of him to his mistress in glowing terms. She, trusting in the sincerity of this praise, decided to make Vincent her almoner. We know that Vincent wished to live a life of obscurity; we may be surprised that he did not keep to his intention. Monsieur Dufresne was either so persuasive that he broke down Vincent's resistance or the saint saw a means of accomplishing, under the

powerful protection of a queen, what was impossible for him in his unaided indigence.

Not without some misgiving, he accepted the new offer. Certainly his inquietude was justified, although, to be sure, his mistress was no longer the Queen Margot of the degenerate Valois days, when she was enamored of luxury and shameless to the point that even her tolerant husband felt obliged, because of the insolence of her love adventures, to confine her far from Paris, in his own chateau of Usson. It was after this that Henry, now King of France, obtained from Pope Clement VIII, in 1599, an annulment of his marriage. Marguerite then changed her manner of living. Partly at Paris, partly in Auvergne, she tried to redeem the scandals of her youth by a blameless life in which charity played an active part. She was then fifty-six years old and despite the arts she used to conceal her years her looks were a thing of the past and she showed her age. But her stature, a remnant of surface freshness, and the still smoldering fire of her temperament made her a striking figure; she was then only beginning to take on the fatness of Catherine de Medici, her mother. She had been a pretty woman and no net-work of sinister scheming had ever wrinkled her face; neither did she have her mother's formidable chin which grew flaccid with the passing of years, nor had she the loose lips of the Medici.

Marguerite still played a very considerable part in the world of her day; that was due as much to the memory of her dramatic past as to the belated dignity of her later life. She had lost a throne but her very faults formed for her a pedestal from which she exercised over her own court a sovereignty to which none could object. If she had not so gravely risked her reputation in her youth, she might not now have excited so much admiration and esteem.

Her early career had not been edifying but she had been so charming and so beloved that she inspired a really cordial esteem on the part of those who knew her. She remained good-natured, simple, unaffected, with a touch of the "bohemian" in her. Years could not correct what was bold and independent in her nature; Catherine de Medici had maintained the strictest court etiquette and ceremonial throughout her reign, even to the somber end of her career, but all this had disappeared under Marguerite. And yet her

court had its memorable days, its brilliant moments, its fetes and its festivities. A daughter of Henry II, Marguerite inherited from her forebears the passion for fine horses, dogs, and for all the pomp and circumstance that accompany processions and fine coaches. From Catherine de Medici, who carried cultivation to the point of pose, Marguerite inherited a love for literature, for illuminated manuscripts, for the rich bindings which made Catherine's private library so famous. Marguerite drew around her writers, musicians, poets. She undertook to write her own memoirs.

This was the brilliant circle, so strange to him, into which Vincent, like a prayer-book dropped in some palace drawing-room, suddenly stumbled. It was a short time, only two years, that Vincent remained at the court of Queen Marguerite. He fulfilled his duties with modesty and closed his eyes and ears to much that others would have observed with sharp curiosity. Even so, we regret that, true to his usual reserve, he has left us no record of what he must have seen and reflected upon, nothing but silence. Nevertheless we must try, in order to gain a proper and necessary notion of what the life of our saint was at this time, to form some picture of his present environment; for with all his detachment from the things of the world, he must have had many severe shocks during his stay in the palace and he must have carried away unforgettable memories.

He had seen Marguerite, sparkling with jewels, seated before her mother's portrait painted in court costume by Francis Clouet. As she sat there, dreamily caressing her pet spaniel, he had listened to the tales she told, with evident relish, of her childhood, of her unhappy betrothal to Henry of Navarre who did not love her and whom she married only when forced and driven to it by her mother. Then he had heard her with a complete change of tone rush into a description of the splendor surrounding her marriage at the Louvre and at Notre-Dame. She spared him no detail. "Yes, Father," she continued, "I glittered with precious stones, I wore royal robes, the crown of a queen, the coat of ermine pointed in black, the great blue mantle, whose train, yards long, was carried by three princesses; the people at the foot of the scaffolding craned their necks for a chance to see me." What did the withered little man in black who listened to this narrative in quiet, sad silence think of it?

And what did he think when, as her chaplain, he heard the confession of her latest sins, now perhaps no longer mortal, but exposing the soul of Margot? What were his thoughts when, all intent on his solemn function, he placed the host upon that tongue which had formerly been so culpable? He had only sympathy for her despite the gulf that separated her from his prayer-laden soul. By deepening his pity how much all of this must have broadened his horizon and helped him! He had seen the heights and depths of human misery. After the Cordelian monastery, Saragossa, Toulouse, and all the schools, he was still prosecuting his studies. This time his university was the court of Queen Marguerite.

The Dauphin

Of the visitors at the Queen's court who attracted Vincent there was one who was a great personage, albeit very small. He lived on the other side of the Seine in a far handsomer palace than the one in the Faubourg Saint-Germain: his residence was the Louvre. It was Louis, the young Dauphin, the son of Marie de Medici, who was from time to time taken to see Queen Marguerite. She loved the boy because of the hostility he had shown to the King's natural children, from the time he was two years old, and because the frank crudeness of his opinions reminded her of his father's brusqueness.

In 1609 Louis was eight years old. From birth Henry IV had intrusted him to his faithful physician, Heroard; this guardian in an amazing diary put down each day a careful account of what the child had done and said, from the time of rising until retiring. On the twenty-fourth of January, he wrote: "At one o'clock the King took him in a carnage to visit Queen Marguerite. The tenth of February he went to the market of Chartreux for the first time with Queen Marguerite, who gave him an armorial shield and a little string of diamonds." The entire gift was valued at two thousand ecus and she told her goldsmith to "give the Dauphin anything he wanted and she would pay the cost". One can judge from this how much pleasure it gave her to spoil the young prince. Another record, on the sixteenth of the same month, ran: "Tooˆ h* m to see Queen Marguerite, Monsieur Concino, and Monsieur de Gondi. The seventh of August, and also the fourteenth, he saw her and on the thirteenth of November he saw her again, after having run down a hare at the Hotel du Luxembourg. On the tenth of December he was taken in a carriage to see her, as well as on the twenty-first, when he played in the garden, danced, listened to music" That was all that was recorded; nine times in the year at least, and there were probably other occasions which Heroard had not bothered to record.

These visits from the prince, then, were not frequent, but there were enough of them to make us sure that Vincent saw the child and spoke with him on more than one occasion. Louis was so headstrong and violent a child that his father had frequently

ordered him whipped. On the twenty-fourth of June, in spite of his eight years, he was thus punished for having attacked a valet with his racquet. In view of this high temper, nothing is more probable than that Marguerite arranged a meeting between the Dauphin and her almoner, that the priest might give the boy a talk on the value of gentleness. If one asks why the name of Vincent does not appear in Heroard's diary, the answer may well be that the doctor felt himself called upon to record only the names of important personages, and that to him the modest Vincent was merely a good priest of no consequence.

Would such a child as this be unlikely to meet the Queen's almoner on his visits to her court? Let us see. This is the Dauphin who accompanied his father, the King, regularly to mass, who went to Saint-Antoine des Champs for vespers, who went to mass during the week, who on Holy Thursday washed the feet of little beggars, and on Good Friday heard the sermon of Pere Coton, who on Holy Saturday went to confession to him, and on Easter returned to hear his sermon; who was sent constantly to chapel, who night and morning said his prayers, who distributed holy water, and during certain weeks went to mass almost daily; who went on August' twelfth to the Abbaye, on the fifteenth, the twenty-first, and the twenty-second, to Vincennes, on the thirtieth to the Minims, and on the thirteenth of September to Picquepusse. This is the child who once said to the physician, Monsieur Heroard:

"Mousseu Heroua, I have thought of a sentiment."

"Monsieur," said Heroard, "will you be so kind as to tell it to me?"

"Yes, Mousseu: 'God will punish children who are not good.' But I have thought of another: 'God will help the children who fear Him.'"

Is it thinkable, I say, that such a child as this, when he went to visit Marguerite, would never have met the Queen's almoner, were it merely from simple politeness? Surely there is good reason to believe that Vincent made at this time the acquaintance of the little prince who, as king, thirty-four years later was to die in his arms.

But it was not at the court of Marguerite that our saint found his life's work. The court religion, as practiced under the patronage of a

worldly and aging princess, was, despite its multiplicity of services, before all primarily a pretext for pomp and ceremony; the incense lacked the odor of sanctity. The great lady, as a penitent, sighed over the price she paid for her now blameless life. Despite the decorous prominence of altars, of monks, and of processions, of visits by carriage to convents and to funerary chapels, God himself lagged a little in the rear of all these pious celebrations, where the genuflections were like ballroom curtseys and ladies wore huge pearl rosaries like pendants from their girdles.

Aside from this, life went merrily on, with fetes galantes, seasoned by Spanish wine, with comedies, contests of wit, poetry, the music of Monsieur de Bouillon, "who combined in himself the lute, the harpsichord, and the violin"; and all this interspersed with laughter, song, and shouts of joy, while the great stables below resounded with the whinnying of spirited horses and the stamp of their feet.

It was in the midst of such a life that Vincent went soberly about his affairs with perfect detachment. He did not attempt to get away but awaited the hour when God should point out the road to him. It came sooner than he expected, and in a wholly surprising manner.

Vincent and the Devil

Queen Marguerite was very fond of intellectual discussion and among those attached to her household was a famous controversialist noted for his zeal and for his writings against heretics. Because of the conditions at court he found himself forced to give up the theological studies he had pursued in his own diocese. His life became completely unbalanced. This is Vincent's explanation:

"Since he neither preached any longer nor gave religious instruction, he fell prey to a serious temptation against faith; which teaches us, incidentally, how dangerous idleness is, either of the body or the soul. A soil may be ever so rich but leave it uncultivated and it will run to weeds and tares; our souls left to themselves will feel passions and temptations that must needs end harmfully. This theologian seeing his dangerous predicament came to me and confessed that he had the most violent temptations against faith, that his thoughts ran to horrible blasphemies against Jesus Christ; his despair was such as to make him wish to throw himself from a window. He was finally reduced to the necessity of giving up the reading of his breviary and of celebrating mass and even of making a single prayer for, when he would begin to recite the paternoster, a thousand spectres assailed him; his mind was so wearied and his soul so exhausted from making acts of disavowal for these temptations that he could struggle no more."

We can see today in this poor haunted man an extreme neurotic case. But at that time the devil played an important role. At the first symptoms of an abnormal condition that science could not explain, one made the sign of the cross and said, "it is the devil." All nervous disorders were attributed to the power, to the malice of Satan. Was a mind unhinged? it was the devil's work. A body twisted? the claw of the devil.

Furthermore, when one has seen, since then, so many splendid minds, so many superior souls, men like Pere Barre, Pascal, the Cure d'Ars to mention only three profoundly disturbed by such tempests, how would he dare to deny that perhaps holiness and

perfection are the first qualities to attract the bolts of Satan, or that these extraordinary disturbances are not the condition of their attaining such sublime heights, the element of suffering that is needed for their salvation?

Vincent was so shaken by the pitiable condition in which the unfortunate man found himself, that in the ardor of his own faith he had the touching desire to serve as a substitute for him. He feared the man would really end in blasphemy and suicide, and Vincent, in a spirit of humility and sacrifice, offered himself to his Redeemer as a victim, to endure in the place of this theologian the torments that were almost killing him.

He who said before all, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord, Thy God," spoke that day an eternal verity. God in solemn acquiescence took Vincent at his word, literally. By a first miracle the tormented man was freed from the temptation that afflicted him. A profound peace possessed him. The storms that had raged in his soul vanished. His tender love for Jesus Christ returned, stronger than before; to the day of his death he praised his Creator for having snatched him from the abyss into which he had been plunged.

At the same time a second miracle, no less amazing, happened; the temptations from which the theologian had been delivered passed into the soul of Vincent, who was crushed by them. Like another Job, he was now prey to the fury of the devil, and it would have been an unbearable spectacle to see this saint, such a model of virtue, goodness, and gentleness, suffering the tortures of the damned, but for the fact that it offered him a chance of displaying before all the world the most admirable courage, the most divine resignation. As neither prayer nor self-mortification brought him relief, he made it a rule of conduct to act as far as he could in a manner contrary to the diabolical suggestions he received. He redoubled his humility, his charity; he gave himself to the poor, throwing himself into the work with the reflex of the force that tortured him. All followed this unprecedented conflict and could have thrown themselves at his feet. The struggle lasted four years.

Vincent, who felt his resistance failing, wrote the Credo on a paper that he placed over his heart; he announced to God that with each assault of Satan he would put his hand on the Credo, and God

would know by the gesture that he repulsed Satan with horror.

"However, one day he was at the end of his strength," relates his friend, Monsieur de Saint-Martin, "and he made a firm, solemn resolution, to the glory of Jesus Christ and in order to imitate Him the more truly, to give himself wholly and forever to the service of the poor."

Much of his strength had already been given to the poor, but his care of them had not in his own mind taken on an exclusive character and an unlimited application. This vow would shut him off from all honors, all comforts, or personal gain; it meant the renouncing of even legitimate ambition; and the turning of his back on the world would shut the door upon one life and "open it upon another."

When his plan was crystallized into definite form the temptations vanished. His soul was flooded with the sweetness of a new-found peace. As before, on the African coast, he could sing, still smiling, but "with a sob in his throat," the *Super flumina*.

The Angels of Clichy

From the time that the temptation seized him Vincent had determined to give up his position as almoner of the Queen and leave the court, which he found quite too distracting and out of harmony with his new ideas. But to whom should he go while making the retreat he needed? No one, he thought could better provide for him than Monsieur de Berulle. Had they not first met in the Hospital of Charity over the bedside of the sick? The remembrance of that friendship formed in such a place led Vincent, quite naturally, along the way that he would henceforth follow. Pere de Berulle was waiting for him. It was with genuine joy that he offered his house for Vincent's retreat; he was at that time surrounding himself with a group of devoted men capable, under his direction, of repairing the wounds caused by Protestantism and of encouraging a more lively faith where it had been weakened or even lost.

Was Vincent still almoner in the year 1609, when Marie de Medici unblushingly attended a ball given by Queen Marguerite? Did Vincent assist at the ceremonies that attended the return to Paris of the ashes of Catherine de Medici? Save for his dislike of funeral pomp, it may well be that he did. For twenty years the widow of Henry II, who had died and been buried at Blois, waited in an obscure crypt until her remains should be transferred to the splendid tomb she had in her lifetime erected at Saint Denis, and where her sculptured form should pray forever by the side of her royal husband.

Marguerite, in truth, troubled herself very little about her mother. If the ashes of Catherine finally were placed in the spot she had chosen, it was not through the pious efforts of her daughter but, quite surprisingly, through those of an elderly, illegitimate daughter of Henry II, Diane d'Angouleme. The moving of the royal remains to the abbey was the occasion of sumptuous ceremonies in which the court of the Louvre and that of the Faubourg Saint-Germain both took part. Marguerite stood in the front ranks with the Dauphin who distributed holy water. When so many members of the clergy were present, it is hard to believe that the almoner of Catherine's

daughter was not there. If he were, then the former shepherd of Pouy, as he stood before the catafalque of her who had either willed or permitted the massacre of Saint Bartholomew, lived over again those evening hours when his parents tremblingly narrated the events of the tragic night of 1572.

It was shortly after Vincent left the court that the assassination of Henry IV took place, a disaster that filled Vincent with grief and pain. He may not have witnessed the disturbances that accompanied it, but he felt keenly the weight of the blow. Vincent had loved this fiery prince whose life had been irregular but who as a ruler was just and good and of whom Vincent often said later: "In becoming a child of the Church, he made himself the father of France."

Vincent felt deeply what the death of the King meant. Perhaps when he heard of it he hastened to the Louvre to look upon, for the last time, and to bless, the ruler to whom so long before he had been sent on a mission. In spite of lack of proof we are pleased to think that Vincent saw from nearby the funeral ceremonies following upon the death of the King, just as he must have witnessed that earlier ceremony, the solemn mass which was sung at Saint Denis at the coronation of Marie de Medici. The almoner of Marguerite had seen her there with head high, carrying the train of her rival's coronation mantle.

Vincent was now living at the Oratory, where he remained for two years before he was appointed to Clichy on the death of its priest. Although this was not in the least what he wished, he ended by accepting the charge. It was his modesty that held him back. As he was unaware of his own merit, he never thought himself equal to the positions that the most demanding persons knew well he could fill.

At Clichy, as everywhere, Vincent showed his great ability. His zeal was such that the parish loved him as soon as they knew him; he was not content merely to know his parishioners by name; he visited them, comforted them, was their guide and their model; in addition to all this, he loved them as personal friends. He had no favorites but when he left one person to go to another each would think, "I am the one that he prefers." Thanks to the tact and the rare

gentleness of his nature he never aroused jealousies. He was so skillful in improving the condition of his flock that it soon seemed there was nothing they needed that he had not done for them. No detail was overlooked. He restored faith to those who had strayed, gave hope to the despairing, healed the stricken. The church was crumbling; he rebuilt it. It had no furniture or decorations; he had fitted out, decorated, and even enriched it to the point that the parish took delight and pride in inspecting it between the services.

To meet these expenses he did not go out after money; it came to him, and his flock did not suffer, for he was careful in his expenditures. It was not merely from Paris that his needs were filled, it was from still further and higher that largesse came; Vincent's sweetness was so touching that his appeals moved both men and the Great Treasurer to whom he addressed his prayers. He had an engaging way of presenting a case. It is said that he painted virtue in such beautiful colors that it appeared wholly desirable and something one longed to possess. One rushed to sacrifice himself because Vincent made unselfishness seem beautiful. As the cross could not be dropped but must be carried, he wreathed it with flowers. Even when far away his hand seemed to hold you, his words dried your tears. Without detracting from the Clichy-la-Garenne of today, we may mention that the Clichy of 1610 reached such a state of edification that men said of it, "they lived like angels."

And yet the seraph of this angelic band must leave them. The proverb says, "When the house is built, the mason leaves." Monsieur de Berulle recalled Vincent; he had need of him elsewhere, in a more important place. Even if Monsieur de Berulle had not exercised over his pupil and friend an authority which would never have been resisted, Vincent would have heeded his wish, for with those whom he completely trusted he had no will of his own. What he might have thought and called his will, Vincent well knew was not really his; for him there was but one will, the will of God, and Vincent was surer that he recognized it when it came to him through another, some one who might be better fitted to interpret it than he. In his humility it was his own worthiness he doubted.

Vincent had known such deep contentment, such perfect peace at

Clichy, that he expressed it by saying: "Even the Pope is not as happy as I." His heart failed him when it came to parting from "his angels," that admirable flock whose shepherd he had been. The whole village accompanied him as far as it was possible for them to go, every one weeping, Vincent more than the rest. He suffered most at parting from his poorer parishioners, for he loved them most. After many farewells and pressings of his hand, when at last he was able to withdraw it from those who wished to kiss it, he gave a final benediction to his assembled parish as they knelt in the road. He turned from time to time in the carriage that was taking him away "with his few belongings"; the driver walked his horse that the people might the longer see their beloved leader waving his hat. In order to deceive both them and himself, he called "until we meet again yes until we meet again!" In his heart he knew that his task was completed and that he would not return.

What a contrast between the peaceful days at Clichy and the new work that awaited him! He was troubled by it. Was he to return to the Court? No, but he was nevertheless to be again among persons of the highest rank, in the home of Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi, Count of Joigny, Commander of the Royal Galleys.

A Great Personage

Because of its present worth as well as its illustrious past, the house of Gondi was among the most distinguished in the kingdom. Originally Florentine, the family had in France furnished Henry II with both a chamberlain and a marshal: one of them the nephew, the other the brother of the three Gondi who between 1572 and 1622 succeeded each other as bishops of Paris; there was also a diplomat in the family, well known for his elegance, who occupied at Saint-Cloud the house in which Henry III was assassinated. Emmanuel, the son of the marshal, had married Frangoise-Marguerite de Silly and had at this time two sons: Pierre, who later became the Duke de Retz, a peer of France and inheritor of his father's office, and Henry, who died in the flower of his youth as the result of a fall from a horse. The third son, the youngest, born in 1614, was the one later known as the impetuous Cardinal de Retz, a most erratic genius and uncertain churchman.

At this time, in 1610, Emmanuel de Gondi possessed the brilliancy and irresistible eclat of youth that fortune showers only on her favorites. What exclamations of surprise must have escaped the lips of those who for the first time saw this splendid nobleman! What a magnificent, radiant creature!

A print by Duflos shows him in all the glory of embroidery, lace, and decorations: the face is a perfect oval and framed in thick, abundant hair; the eyebrows set off the thoughtful eyes beneath, a bristling mustache brushes the aristocratic nose, a pointed beard touches the fluted rufl; his garb is sumptuous with pleated velvet, gold, fine laces; he wears the cross of the Order of the Holy Ghost; his cap with its white aigrette is worn at a fashionable angle over the ear and reveals his fine forehead. In a fillet at the bottom of the portrait the engraver had placed the motto, *Non sine labore*, and his coat of arms with its two orders, those of Saint Michael and of the Holy Ghost.

Accompanying his coat of arms are two crossed anchors which indicate the office of Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi, who at thirty years of age was commander of the galleys of the King.

Near this splendid person we must picture Vincent, very slim in his black cassock, which is a little rubbed at the elbows and quite worn at the knees; he is shabbier than any valet in the house, but this humble, dark figure is in his way dignified and would arrest attention at once. This, then, is the picture before us two men made for each other, complementing each other, who together are to lay the foundations of an astonishing, monumental work.

For the moment, we are concerned with nothing monumental, but only with the simple, though important, problem of the education of two children, the two little boys of the Gondi family. This meant taking from the hands of their governess the young children of a great lord, who, already having a sense of their rank, needed to be taught what that rank implied from every angle. They must be shown the superior position in which God had placed them but they must learn obedience since they must one day command; they must know the proper use of their riches, as the poor were constantly to be thought of; they must be prepared for the high office that Church or State offered to those of their rank. This was the task presented to Vincent and conscientiously assumed by him.

In all this Vincent was aided by Madame de Gondi. Indeed her home counted itself among those in which religion, instead of being ignored, was given a dignified place. In that house piety was not the luxury that it was in so many others; the Gondi used their wealth first of all in the service of religion. God, even before the King, was the head of their house; of the two masters He came first. Then far in the rear came the others, each treated, naturally, according to his rank and each receiving the consideration to which he was entitled. This system, we can well understand, resulted in many heart-burnings and complaints. The former chaplain of Marguerite of Valois, still remembering his years at court and fearing a recurrence of the same difficulties, formed a strict rule of conduct by which he hoped to avoid embarrassment. One of his biographers describes it: "In order to live with prudence and simplicity he made it a rule never to see Monsieur and Madame de Gondi unless they sent for him; and never to concern himself with anything which did not bear directly upon his position as tutor. Outside of the time he devoted to the education of his pupils, or to works of charity, he did not leave his room. It was for him a true hermit's cell and while

every one else in the house came and went he kept an inviolable refuge for himself in this room."

Only a man of quality, perhaps only a man of his quality, would have been able to lead two such existences in such close proximity to each other; one, a life of silence and retreat, of teaching and meditation; the other, attendance at fashionable gatherings and receptions whenever Monsieur de Gondi deemed it desirable. And then there was in addition his outside life of charity and almsgiving, his visits to hospitals and individual homes, and his correspondence which was beginning to take much of his time. It was indeed difficult in the midst of all these occupations to live always as in the presence of God's spirit. Fortunately he found the means and a sure one. Let him explain it himself. In order to sanctify himself in his new employment he imagined it as something still higher. He made it his duty "to see and honor Jesus Christ in the person of Monsieur de Gondi and the Blessed Virgin in that of Madame de Gondi; in the officers and servants of all grades he tried to see the disciples and the throngs that surrounded Our Lord." In perfect simplicity he recorded "that this practice has always given him a modest and prudent use of his tongue and that it resulted in this case in an affectionate relation with his master and mistress and with the whole household, from which much good resulted."

Vincent adds further: "This method is simplicity itself and it resulted during a life of long service in my seeing some aspect of God in every person with whom I was much associated; it led me to do nothing before human beings that I should not have done before the Son of God had it been my happiness to converse with Him during His life on earth."

A sublime and beautiful avowal! It seems to come from the lips of the shepherd boy with all the innocence of the country and dewy with the freshness of his faith. Yes, to see God in everything and in every one it was "simplicity itself," even as he said; it was not a philosophy that he had thought out, but something that came to him without being sought. From that time on, in the jeweled and plumed Emmanuel de Gondi, with his ornaments, his sword and dagger, Vincent saw the Master of his master, a spiritual Saviour whose simple garments fell over bare feet; and equally Madame de

Gondi in her stately and voluminous costume, her hooped skirt and fringes, disappeared, or rather, despite all this outer elaboration, she could not hide the silhouette within of that Immaculate one whose only ornaments were the lilies she bore.

Can you hold in your hand the key to Vincent's method and dare smile at it or be in the least skeptical of it? Ah, truly, the saints are poets and the greatest of our idealists. Here on earth they are the only ones who see beyond this world and beneath its surface; others either have not the eyes with which to see, or they will not see. Vincent shows us how he adjusted himself to one situation, and by so doing he reveals the psychology of his whole life. We hold his key in our hands. To see everything in God and God in everything was his method, his practice. He had penetrated to the great truth that God is not in heaven alone, lost to view and living as a spirit apart, but that He is also among us on earth, at our side, "in the current of things." To everything is He present close, hidden. Vincent learned to discover Him in man, in all men, not only in the good but in the lowest, the least worthy. In the face of squalor and impurity he forgot the squalor and the impurity to remember the goodness and innocence that were obscured or lost; he reestablish them in the position they once had or should have had; he revealed in them the face of God which for him was visible in them; he emphasized it until it was substituted for all other forces and annihilated them.

This caused men to yield to him. Then the path became easy for Vincent and everything fell into place. The man from the gutter, the repulsive derelict, the fallen woman as she laughs or weeps, the abandoned child, the bandit, yes even the galley-slaves, convicts that they are, contain God; God Himself is in them or near them, touches them, joins them or will join them; and that right soon, this evening perhaps, and at any rate before long. It is among such that He is eager to take His abode: "Through their sins and their filth, I see Him, I touch Him. In gathering them in and in loving them it is He whom I greet and love and honor. I kiss the wounds of Christ when I dress theirs. In ministering to them, I heal myself."

Thus for Vincent de Paul the meaningless shell of the body fell away like a worn-out covering and left only the living soul. And

when across the veil of pain or vice or hatred that covered a sick soul he saw a smile of gratitude appear, or the light in a friendly eye, his heart was illumined with joy. It was the face of God which said to him, "It was indeed I, whom thou sawest. Thou hast understood."

This humility of Vincent's was a voluntary action and if he saw fit he could assert himself with vigor. Monsieur de Gondi received or thought he had received a signal affront from a nobleman at court. At that time an affair of honor took precedence over everything else; it was not even discussed. Duels had been forbidden as recently as the time of Henry IV under pain of a charge of treason, but duelling went on as before. These contests were imposed upon men with the binding force of another religion quite as powerful as that of the Church which forbade them. In fact one was confused with the other. What the Church condemned as a crime, custom made a virtue, absolving from all guilt; the duellist called heaven to his aid and before the final appeal he went to church with the good sword he was to draw. Some would have had the sword blessed had that been possible.

Monsieur de Gondi, we are told, followed the etiquette of his time; he heard mass the morning of the day that he was to cross swords with his adversary. He remained in the chapel praying longer than usual. His prayers finished, he left the chapel and found himself confronted by Vincent who, as though in ambuscade, awaited him. He barred his passage, then fell at his feet. "Permit me, oh, permit me, Monseigneur, to say a word to you in all humility. I am told that you are about to engage in a duel, but I say to you solemnly, on the authority of my Saviour whom I have just shown you and whom you have just adored, that if you do not give up this evil intention, His justice will be upon you and upon your posterity." Gondi, in the moment of astonishment and annoyance that followed this threat might easily have replied, at the same time being careful not to be offensive: "What is that you are asking, and of me? Do you forget who I am and what the traditions of my house are, the achievements of my ancestors, and the honor of my father the Marshal de Retz; what my own rank as a peer of France, my personal honor and that of my sons, impose upon me? An outrage

to a Gondi can be washed away only in the blood of him through whom the offense came." If the great commander thought all this, something kept the words back and, moreover, he would have had no listener, for the moment his almoner had spoken his warning he disappeared, leaving his master troubled and alone. De Gondi was disturbed by the surge of emotion that swept him but he was also deeply moved by the warning and threat of this priest. His chaplain had invoked God against him. The threat of God's vengeance was suspended over his own head and over his young sons; that made him hesitate. For the first time his sword, which had been so ready to transgress, remained in its scabbard.

Madame de Gondi

Vincent could not stop at this happy victory. His zeal against duelling may be dated from the day of his encounter with his patron; kter in his counsels to the King he was unremitting in his stand against this custom. Some of the credit for de Gondi's behavior in this matter can be given his wife without in any way minimizing the effect of Vincent's appeal. Madame de Gondi had the greatest influence with her husband and in the question of duelling her ideas were in conformity with the tenets of her religion.

In every well-ordered family, those who have charge of the education of the children are necessarily brought into close contact with the mother of the children; if the tutor is intelligent and tactful, it often happens that the mother learns from him as much as do the children. In the case of Madame de Gondi there was no need of instruction for her mind was intelligent and she was already brilliantly educated. But she frequented the class-room, heard Vincent teach, and saw him in action, and she began to learn things that are not taught in the world nor in books. She began to understand and value Vincent himself, his goodness, his piety, his unfailing wisdom, the depth of his insight which saw every side of human nature but which passed the confines of what is merely human. It seemed that he traveled between earth and sky, mounting and descending at will, without effort and by means known only to himself.

When Vincent had been a year in the house Madame de Gondi determined to take him as her spiritual director. To gain his consent to this she appealed to Pere de Berulle, asking him to overcome the objections that she foresaw Vincent would make. Pere de Berulle undertook the task. As both he and Madame de Gondi had foreseen, Vincent was loath to undertake so important a duty but it was placed in the light of a request from an ecclesiastical superior and he was obliged to accept it. Vincent was beginning to see that he was a person who would never belong to himself. He now belonged more than ever to the house of de Gondi; if he saw the Blessed Virgin in Madame de Condi, he must have believed that it was

under that patroness's inspiration that he had been chosen spiritual director.

Madame de Gondi was a woman of the highest character but now that she had taken Vincent as her spiritual director one could mark her progress toward perfection. A new and sacred bond united her with Vincent; in the love of God their souls were one and in this union they began to accomplish a far-reaching and marvelous work of social reconstruction. The estates of the Gondi were of such vast extent that it did not seem possible that even a woman of Madame de Condi's intelligence and orderly mind would be capable of exercising a moral control over them such as she now wished. It was not enough in her eyes to be busied over questions of maintenance and cultivation and productiveness. Regardless of material considerations she desired to employ on her estates only stewards of recognized probity, to. avoid litigation, to settle differences amicably, to see impartial justice done to vassals, to be assured of their comfort and good conduct, so that God would be known and His laws kept in all places dependent upon her.

In addition were many other subjects of concern. There were the old, the new-born, the sick, widows, orphans, a whole population in fact to be classified, calmed, brought from far and from near, often from great distances and in inclement weather, so that their cases could be personally investigated. And all this was in addition to the daily demands imposed in Paris on the wife of a commander: the world of society, the court, the princes of the blood, the Church, the King; and then too her husband and her children. She managed to accomplish the task thanks to Vincent, her companion in zeal and charity; he took a large half of the burden on his own shoulders and so made it possible for her to carry her share. Thus in a double devotion they taught, nursed, baptized, married, and buried hundreds of vassals, humble members of the lower class attached to their house. Under different masters they would have been treated like cattle. As one wrote with regard to them later:

> Grind with taxes; yoke like cattle.
> Best of all, use in battle.

Madame de Gondi was as remarkable for her beauty and her wit as for her angelic goodness: she was at once noble and simple, pure

and gentle; but her soul was ardent and restless in its search for perfection. Those who knew her represented her as having not one flaw in her nature. After the consecration of her existence to this work with Vincent she was filled with a passionate piety. Her delicate health, however, felt the strain. She fell ill, even dangerously ill. Neither one of the two dedicated to this work had spared himself; Vincent, as well as Madame de Gondi, was exhausted by it, and could not go on.

A General Confession

A little after this an incident occurred, something quite accidental and unlooked-for, which was to be a turning-point in Vincent's career and would lead him toward the ideals that God had set for him. He had scarcely recovered from the illness brought on by his exhaustion, when he accompanied the Gondi to their estate at Folleville, near Amiens. One night he was called to the bedside of a dying peasant who had asked for a priest. Vincent went at once. The sick man was known as a devout and good Christian, but with a flash of intuition Vincent asked the man to use his last strength in making a general confession. The tender exhortations of Vincent did not at first move him. But with the arrival of Madame de Gondi, who came to inquire for him, the sick man was further moved and opened his heart to God. He then disclosed to Vincent a conscience freighted with mortal sins which shame had until then kept him from confessing. The peasant lived for three days after his absolution, in his joy and peace telling those about him how low he had sunk and how he had been rescued. Madame de Gondi returned to his bedside. He recognized her and in the presence of his neighbors from the village the peasant gathered his dying forces to testify: "Madame, without you and without my general confession, I should have been lost."

Abelly has preserved the scene for us: "This noble lady, filled with amazement, exclaimed to her chaplain, 'Oh, sir, what do my ears hear? What does this avowal mean? If this man who seemed to live a good life was in reality a lost soul, what must the condition of those be who openly live evil lives? Monsieur Vincent, how many souls are lost! What can be done?'" In the anguish of her heart she turned to Vincent as the one person who could answer her question. Her whole being expressed such dependence upon and confidence in the man of God that those present arose and joined her, stretching out their arms toward him. There followed sobs, tears, cries of appeal, in the midst of which the old peasant in his death agony gave up his soul to God, supported by the arms of one of the greatest ladies of France and by those of a saint whose soul was flooded with divine light.

The effects of this death were immediate and far-reaching. The whole neighborhood had been so stirred that Madame de Gondi, who felt the peril with which many other poor souls were menaced, suggested to her chaplain to meet the situation by calling together the people of Folleville and preaching them a sermon on the value of general confession.

On the twenty-fifth of January, 1617, the day on which the Church celebrates the conversion of Saint Paul, Vincent preached his sermon. His appeal was made with that simplicity, gentle friendliness, and warmth of feeling that went straight to the hearts of his hearers and won them. God put such power into his words that his hearers were thrilled; they looked within themselves, searched obscure corners, examined former sins in the new light now afforded them. Trembling and yet satisfied with the result, they turned at once to the form of penance and redemption that the day before would have seemed impossible. All the country around streamed to the church; the confessional was in a state of siege. Many came from the neighboring villages, equally eager to hear the saint; they, in turn, must be instructed. Still others came. The province began to stir with a ferment of repentance, an eagerness for penance, an open desire for a state of grace.

Vincent was seized with the joy and fear of one who thinking to light a torch suddenly sees a whole country startlingly illumined by the light. All had responded, all believed themselves lost, and they could not endure the suspense until they had received absolution. They were impatient. They had lived a spiritual existence in which they either ignored the efficacy of a general confession or had ceased to think of it, but at present it had become an imperious need. The crowd surged into the chapel, each seeking to be the first to fling himself, breathless, on his knees before the saint in order to pour out the tale of his sins.

"Let me! No, let me! It's my turn; I was before you!" An unruly flock and hard to hold and without the shepherd dog just like his old flock in moments of hunger and panic when his faithful dog was not by.

These confessions were not brief, they lasted on and on; penitents refused to leave until they were sure all had been told. Outside, the

long shuffling line increased constantly in number. The crowd became so great that Vincent was worn out; Madame de Gondi saw that she must get assistance from Amiens, and two Jesuits were sent to help in this spiritual cleansing of the parish.

The date of this mission is memorable, not only in the life of Vincent de Paul, but in the history of religion. Did the saint know it? His biographers think not. We are inclined to think he did. This dreamer of noble dreams saw with such lucidity and into such exalted regions that it is hard to believe he did not see the extent to which the movement begun at Folleville might go; that it might be like gunpowder in the firing of a mine. Certainly Vincent never forgot this wonderful twenty-fifth of January.

It became a sacred anniversary and each year he celebrated it. More than twenty-five years later he invited his priests of Saint-Lazare to commemorate with him the anniversary of his sermon at Folleville, for on that day, in spirit and in reality, his Company was founded. His hour had struck. His Mission had been born and was already vitally alive.

Vincent Runs Away

A great work usually causes immediate and radical changes in the life of him who undertakes it, changes that can not be foreseen. Vincent had no sooner emerged from the exhausting days that had so agitated him than he felt the necessity not so much for physical rest as for spiritual isolation. He needed to meditate upon the meaning of the recent events and also to withdraw himself from an environment which, less than ever, fitted his present state of mind.

The talk consequent upon his success he could not stop, but it did not please him; he was offended by the praises that overwhelmed him from those of both high and low degree. He loved people but not popularity. He feared praise. He trembled lest he, too, should feel the dizzy pride which had caused the fall of so many whose position seemed, thanks to their virtues, more than secure. The Gondi children were now growing up and with years came the added violence of character inherited from their father. Vincent felt that he could not longer exercise the proper control over them.

The noble Madame de Gondi herself began to be a subject of inquietude to her almoner. The religious amity that existed between them caused her to be somewhat exacting and expressed itself in an excess of gratitude that repelled him and made him even unfair to her. She felt that Vincent had become her unique guide, her light from above, an indispensable aid, but Vincent's own sense of justice was such that he, "a humble man," could not endure seeing himself so exalted and he attempted constantly to restrain her.

Finally the disturbances that were the forerunners of the Fronde now stirred Paris, and Vincent determined to retire to some remote district in the provinces and there devote himself in peace and quiet to the needs of the poor. This was his one desire. The thought of city pavements wearied him; the fields called him. It was at Monsieur de Berulle's request that Vincent had entered the Gondi household; he did not wish to leave it without informing his superior. He was so firm in his resolution that Monsieur de Berulle felt that it might be an inspiration; he therefore approved the plan and suggested that Vincent should "begin work" at Chatillon-les-

Dombs, in Bresse.

It was a poor little town, deserted, ruined by the religious wars, unpleasantly divided between Protestants and Catholics, who lived at enmity and had, in the proper sense of the words, neither pastor nor priest. For at least a century they had been in the hands of men whose only interest in them was mercenary, who visited them merely to receive their payments, and were contented to be represented by slack priests, who had lost all sense of their proper duties. What an assignment for Vincent! Any one else would have shuddered at the thought of it; he accepted it joyfully. He was eager to begin his journey, but the commander of the King's galleys was then in Provence. Vincent therefore wrote him to announce his plans; he explained to Monsieur de Gondi that he, the former shepherd of Pouy, had not the high qualities nor the brilliance necessary for the training of young gentlemen who would hold exalted position at court, and he begged to be allowed to retire.

Vincent packed his few belongings under pretext of a short trip and without farewells to any one and without regrets left the house of the Gondi and started for Chatillon of which he dreamed and which he was impatient to reach. Madame de Gondi did not know that he had left until he was well on his way; then the news reached her through a letter from her husband, in which he told her "in a sorrowful manner how inconsolable he was at the loss and urged her to try every means of getting him back."

It was too late. Vincent was well on his way, perhaps already there, and Madame de Gondi knew only too surely that this extraordinary man was not one of those who could be turned back or swerved from a resolution once formed. It was nevertheless a severe blow to her. The news reached her on the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross and she was prostrated by it. She shed torrents of tears, lost her appetite, suffered from sleeplessness, and those about her feared for her reason. This disappearance of the guide and protector in whom she had placed her highest hopes for her own salvation and his leaving her alone, weak, and exposed to distressing emotions, she could not understand. The tenderness of her respect for him became distorted and embittered by his flight. He spoke of a "mission"! Quite so. Did he not already have one that should have

detained him? He had accepted a duty near her and he was deserting it. In her reasoning she was perhaps showing more pity for herself than for him. She felt a betrayal of the soul and she suffered in not knowing to whom to unburden herself. She was stunned that Vincent did not have the courage to write her himself, that he had acted first and then approached her through her husband, not directly. Doubtless, she did not care actually to apply the word "cowardice" to his strange conduct, but deep within her she must have felt the term justified.

Goodness, however, spoke more firmly in her heart than bitterness and she resumed the strong Christian life in which she was to persevere ever afterward. She used the only means left her they were after all the strongest ones resignation, prayer, and hope.

Châtillon-les-Dombs

When our fugitive reached Chatillon, what did he find? All that he had expected and all that Monsieur de Berulle had warned him to expect did not begin to approach the reality. We shall give only a synopsis of the long indictment which the inhabitants themselves made of the deplorable state of their town. It was an unhealthy and exceedingly filthy place where the numerous houses, already in ruins or deserted by their owners, gave shelter to the vagabonds and robbers who infested the highways. In other houses, which were hostile and tightly barred, lived groups of Protestants, embittered by suffering and animated with malice. Everywhere low passions and the worst excesses, all in life that most grieved the man of God. The manse was in ruins, the church was stripped of its furnishings and exhibited such a degree of untidiness as to smite the heart and daunt the mind.

This spectacle, however, encouraged Vincent. Was it not a justification of his conduct, a crying proof that he was right in hastening to this cesspool where surely he was more needed than under the gilded ceilings of the Gondi or in their elegant country estates at Joigny and Montmirail?

Vincent began in a perfectly systematic manner. He sent to Lyon for an assistant, a doctor whose ability and zeal had been well recommended. A dwelling was hastily put in order for the two men who, without a woman in the house, gave an example of a life well ordered and open to the sight of all men. They arose and began the day at five o'clock. Prayers, household affairs, offices, mass; then visits without distinction of class or creed, to the sick and the well, the Catholic and the Huguenot; for just as there was no priest worthy the name, Chatillon also had no fit pastor. Then came study, the confessional, even manual labor, if it seemed necessary.

At the same time a great scrubbing of the dishonored church was going on. When it was clean from top to bottom, Vincent began another "cleansing," that of the former priests upon whose souls had settled the dust of neglect. All or nearly all of them had sunk into indolence or into a life of gross indulgence. Vincent's weapons of

sweetness and goodness did not desert him, but underneath he had a will of iron which startled them. He ordered that those priests who received into their houses "persons who might be termed suspicious," should banish such persons forever. He turned out of the cabarets and places of public gambling those who frequented them. Other abuses which existed and which he considered shameful he corrected; among others that of demanding and accepting money and for what? For the sacrament of Penance!

Did he rest after the completion of these tasks? No, he did not even pause; he talked, exhorted, counseled, with words and gestures quite his own, full of freshness and grace, in his eyes the smile of a child. When he was not busy outside he was always to be found in the church which he considered his permanent place, ready to come or go, at the disposal of all who wished him. At every call, at the sound of a step, Vincent's large head would appear from the door, his face radiant with the beauty of a never-failing greeting. He did not seem hurried and, however heavy his duties, he never showed fatigue. He bore easily the burdens of others, but it was these burdens that each day bent his back a little more; he was like a miller growing round-shouldered from carrying his sacks of grain. Vincent's back carried a cross.

The method and order introduced by Vincent had transformed Chatillon within a year. There was an increasing movement of return to the Church. Gambling and duelling stopped. Morals were improved. The church was crowded. The people were happy. The miracle that Vincent had wrought at Clichy was renewed at Chatillon. He made imperfect human beings into Christians whose law was the law of angels. Vincent accomplished this by means of his own delicate and widespread works of charity, by the magic of preaching which appealed to common sense and yet touched the heart at the same time, by all the paths, great and little, through which the heart may be reached. He knew these paths well and his victories could therefore be won by the gentlest means.

Two of the most surprising of these may be cited. They were won by the forces of which he was the leader and which he continued to command, "in face of the enemy" per scecula sceculorum.

The Count de Rougemont

The first of these victories was won by Vincent over two ladies of quality whose life had been a scandal; he influenced them to such a point that they gave up their irregular ways and devoted themselves henceforth to the service of the poor. The singular power that Vincent exhibited over licentious persons was due less to his knowledge of vice, which as a priest and a confessor he was well in a position to know, than to the spotless purity that seemed to radiate from him so that it affected all who approached him.

His second victory was the more difficult of the two because it was entangled with the whole question of the disorders among the nobles; it involved a certain lord, the Count de Rougemont. This lord lived in the neighborhood of Chatillon and was famous for his duels and for his licentious life; he had passed years at court and was admired as a man of the world. He was at this time growing old but he did not relax in his favorite pastime of drawing his sword upon the slightest pretext. It was a mania with him, not merely a habit. He "saw red" for no reason at all. He prized above everything else this career of duelling, or rather of killing, since he never failed to leave his opponent stretched dead on the ground. He was a madman whom every one feared and would be glad to see dead.

Vincent could not have been attracted by this nobleman but he did wish to meet him. The two men had heard much of each other and for different reasons each wished to meet the other. On his side, Rougemont was piqued by hearing the eloquence and the virtue of Vincent so often extolled and in order to judge for himself entered the church one day while Vincent was preaching. He was affected to such an extent by what he heard that he went back again and, going straight to Vincent, in his own brutal way admitted to him that he was a criminal, deserving of every punishment, and that he was ready to make atonement for his past sins. The saint recommended him to make at once a general confession. This the count was already eager to do and forthwith made a sincere and searching avowal of the sins of a life-time.

Following this conversion the count sold his estates of Rougemont;

the thirty thousand ecus which accrued from the sale he divided between the poor and the monasteries. The penitent had lost nothing of his violence but he turned it now toward the forces of goodness. A contemporary writer said of him: "He gave himself over to the most heroic practices of the Christian life. He denounced his crimes, wept, deplored his past, wished to plunge himself into the most complete poverty. Eager to detach himself from the things of this world he cried out, using for his salvation the terms of the swordsman that had so often fallen from his lips. 1 must cut over, retreat, break all lines and I go straight to God.'"

The count would have taken the shirt off his back, had it not been for Vincent's counsels of moderation. He obtained the privilege of having the Blessed Sacrament in his chapel and there, kneeling without support, he spent three hours or more in meditation each day. Those who had loathed him in the past were amazed. People came from far to see him at his devotions, but he appeared not to notice them. Nothing could force him to be moderate. The count having followed the command of God: "Vende omnia" had literally sold all that he possessed, with the one exception of his sword. It was never drawn but it was always with him, even at worship, and at night it hung at the head of his bed. Vincent relates the story:

"I remember especially his telling me that one day when on a journey he utilized the time to examine his conscience and see if he had renounced everything, or if there still remained something to which he was attached. He thought of property, friends, his reputation, the important and unimportant impulses of his heart; he examined and reexamined himself. Finally his eyes fell on his sword: 'Why do I carry thee?' he said to himself. And then, 'What! Give up the cherished sword that has served thee well on so many occasions and that, after God, has best protected thee in a thousand dangers! Even now were one to attack thee, thou wouldst be lost without thy sword. Yes, and if a quarrel arose even now, wouldst thou have the force to refrain from drawing thy sword and from again offending God? What, O God, shall I do, what shall I do? Is this instrument of my former shame still so dear to my heart! It is this sword alone that is my stumbling block.' Instantly he got off his horse and seeing a large rock unsheathed his sword, broke it upon the rock, remounted, and rode off."

Such was the miracle that seems more wonderful than the conversion of the two ladies of quality who had given themselves to a life of scandal. The Count de Rougemont admitted later that this last sacrifice was the supreme effort for him. When one thinks of the close connection at that time between a gentleman and his sword, and how nearly it represented all that love and honor meant to him, we must the more admire the old fighter who consented to give up his beloved weapon. The count realized that his sword had shared in his guilt and his delirium for blood and that it, too, must expiate past crimes. That was why, with his own hand which had a thousand times held it, caressed it and flourished it, he punished and broke it, leaving it shattered on the earth that had formerly received the victims of its folly.

Did he perhaps gather up the broken pieces? No, for what would he have done with them? He had, to use his own words, "cut over," and "retreated." The noble lord had thrown away his last possession to take up the scrip of Saint Francis. The knotted cord was now his belt and hereafter it was this cord and not a sword that hung at his side.

Vincent de Paul was witness of his passing when the Count de Rougemont ascended on high to the Field-of-the-Angels where the Great Commander himself gave him back his sword, now made whole.

Among the Lowly

A Woman's Way

Monsieur and Madame de Gondi grieved equally over the departure of Vincent, but it was Madame de Gondi who suffered the most through the loss of her spiritual director. She did not hide her grief; at first she confided it to her husband but later made it known to all. In this she took a certain bitter pleasure since she hoped thus to let the absent one know how deeply she suffered. Far from resigning herself to the inevitable, she made feverish plans for snatching Vincent from Chatillon and forcing him to occupy in her house the only place that to her seemed worthy of him.

She appealed to Monsieur de Berulle. He listened to her and calmed her as well as he could. "Well," he concluded, "since you ask my advice, write Vincent de Paul and tell him everything you have told me; write it just as you have told it, in the same prayerful way, and let him see your distress."

Madame de Gondi obeyed at once. The letter is too long to quote entirely; it betrays an emotion that would melt any heart; her tears must have fallen as she wrote it. "I am in a pitiable plight my children grow worse each day. The influence for good felt when you were here, both in my household and among the seven or eight thousand persons upon our estates, no longer exists. You know that I need your help both to live and to die. Monsieur de Berulle has promised me to write you; I invoke you in the name of God and of the Blessed Virgin to return to our house! . . . I implore you once again to come!" In a post-script was this threat: "If after all this, you refuse me, I shall place upon you, before God, the complete responsibility for everything that may happen to me, as well as for all the good I may fail to do, in the absence of your support."

It is quite clear that suffering had made the good lady lose somewhat her sense of proportion. Those two young fighting-cocks of the Gondi line, proud of their spurs, haughty, bristling with independence, are only indifferently well described as "growing worse each day," because, forsooth, Monsieur Vincent is no longer there to keep them within bounds. Moreover, the eight thousand souls on the estates of this great lady, although they grieved at the

loss of him who had wrought their redemption, did not at once slip back into evil ways. The anguish felt by Madame de Gondi is, however, so real that it ends by being communicated to her reader who then excuses this excess of ardor. We may be permitted to admire, even as we smile, the feminine strategy of her Parthian arrow, the pious dart with which the letter ends. She charitably warns her almoner that if he does not heed her prayer, expressed with some warmth, she will hold him responsible for any harm that may befall her soul; she is almost ready for spiritual blackmail, if we may venture to use the term.

On a high plane and from lofty motives she imitates the ruse by which a despairing lover says to the loved one he wishes to move, "If you refuse me, I will kill myself before your eyes. I will throw myself from the window."

When Monsieur Vincent received this letter from Madame de Gondi he had already foreseen it, and knew what its contents would be, so that, while touched, he was not disturbed as to the fate of his penitent either in this world or the next; nor did he hold himself culpable in any matter concerning her. He knew too well, in spite of her ardent words, the mettle of her noble soul and he knew she ran no risks because of his absence. He wrote what he could to reassure her, but he did not stir. Chatillon held him; there was so much more to be accomplished. The converts were increasing in number and he must be there to direct them, whether they were heretics of importance or hardened old warriors, men who had murdered, pillaged, and committed all the crimes of violence; and whom he must manage somehow deftly to ensnare in the nets of Faith and take captive. Could he leave such a task unfinished?

The wife of the commander of the King's galleys, however, was not a person easily defeated. Vincent's opposition aroused her and made her own resistance all the stronger; the thought of a victory over him was the only thing that could absorb all her energies. There is an improper old proverb that says: "A woman's will is God's will." It would seem to apply to the present circumstances. If God were on her side, surely the case against the saint would be won. Vincent might be strong but what could he do against God and against her? She redoubled her activity and her efforts; she made visits, and let

loose a flood of letters in which she begged the help of her husband, her brother-in-law, the Bishop of Paris, Pere de Berulle, and many others as well. Her hand was seen everywhere.

There was a certain gentleman attached to Madame de Condi's house, for whose wisdom and intelligence she had a high regard. He it was who had been the means of placing Vincent with Queen Marguerite; later Vincent had recommended him as secretary to Monsieur de Gondi. To him Madame de Gondi now turned. Well instructed and, moreover, devoted to her cause du Fresne left for Chatillon armed with all the letters that the lady could provide. Madame de Gondi had chosen an ambassador of the most subtle intelligence, one who well knew the way in which to reach Vincent through his sense of duty. Du Fresne mentioned in a casual manner the griefs of the commander's wife as though politeness compelled him to allude to them, but after very sketchily presenting that side of the case, he quickly passed to the one argument he felt might move Vincent: the obvious comparison between what he could in the future do at Chatillon and at Paris. It was easy to convince Vincent that the amount of good to be accomplished in Chatillon was relatively small. The difficult work there had already been done and all that was needed was a faithful priest to complete it. If he consented to return to the Gondi, a great work, promising fruitful results, awaited him; it was indeed an immense task, for it included not merely the thousands of the Gondi dependents, but Paris, the court, in short, all France.

These arguments, well presented, could not fail to impress Vincent. He asked for time to reflect, took counsel of his advisers; everywhere the opinion of Monsieur du Fresne was confirmed. Vincent submitted to his destiny and entrusted to du Fresne two letters in which he told Monsieur and Madame de Gondi that he would shortly return.

When this became known in Bresse the disappointment was followed by a universal, un-nerving feeling of despair. "In losing our Father we are losing our all," was repeated sorrowfully on every side. People wept and cried aloud. Some grew angry and said he should not leave; they would hold him, detain him forcibly. The last of the heretics who had not yet had sufficient time to capitulate and

so were not disappointed at his leaving still proclaimed his virtue, his goodness, his talents.

"Ah," they said, not without malice, to their Catholic neighbors, "in losing your priest you are losing the chief support of your religion. It is too bad!"

The farewell made to Vincent by the town of Chatillon was, as at Clichy, simple and touching, but this time it was not so self-contained. And yet he had not been five months in the parish. He divided his furniture among the poor before he left; it was of no great value a rude table and a few chairs, a hard little bed, a sideboard with a little linen, and a small store of provisions was all he possessed. But as quickly as these humble belongings were given to the poor they were bought up by the rich, except in a few cases where the owners refused to sell them for any sum. Men came almost to blows over these possessions; the ownership of an old hat was as bitterly contested as though it already was the relic of a saint and such indeed it was and as worthy of hanging in a church, suspended above the choir, as any cardinal's hat with its gold tassels.

Vincent left Chatillon on foot escorted by a groaning, weeping, vociferous crowd, who shouted: "Have mercy on us." An eye-witness remarked, "It was quite as though the city had been taken by storm." These people had seen and suffered so many evils and afflictions of all kinds,, that it was but natural they should keep the habit of weeping, shouting, and protesting, with the tossing of arms and a display of the same emotions which they had felt during the war, plague, famine, and their other former calamities. Public grief has its etiquette. The crowd pressed close to the saint and touched him; they seized his hands to kiss them; he was nearly smothered. Mothers held up their children to him.

Vincent, pushed about and shoved, half in tears and half smiling, could scarcely make headway; although it was winter the sweat streamed from his brow. He did his best to speak to each one and then for the last time addressed them: "My children, my children, I give you my blessing, I shall pray for you pray for you always."

He could say nothing more. An hour later, far from Chatillon, alone

on a dreary highway he repeated, "I shall pray." The freezing wind of December caught his mantle and blew it out like a sail. He did not notice it; he was not cold.

"I shall pray."

The Mission

If Vincent, despite the anguish in his heart, was resigned at leaving his flock after being with it so short a time, it was due to the magic of a single word, a marvellous word which appeared before him in such splendor that it illumined him, the word mission.

In that word he understood his vocation; he was a missionary, that and nothing else; he was one sent, an apostle, a pilgrim, a charge d'affaires of God. He must pass his life in a succession of missions, if it pleased God to point them out to him and give them to him, one after the other. They would all be but one great mission, lasting until death, since the missionary is never through. Vincent had no wish for retirement and he fled repose. Age was creeping upon him but it could not stop him. The older and more venerable he became, the greater would be his obligations, the greater his power.

Vincent's first mission was to return to the Gondi and to plunge into the great work there. He went with good heart. One can fancy how he was received. He surely allowed no celebration of his return but embarked at once on the organization of his undertaking which, although on a small scale now in comparison with what was to be, he already saw stretching out into the future under his guiding hand. The word missionary was now rich in meaning for him; he joined it to that of almoner, which he had before looked upon rather as a title and whose significance he had not completely seized; he now saw, however, a new connection between the two words, and understood fully the extent of the horizon they opened before him.

To be almoner in such a house as that of the Gondi he had thought of in his humility as meaning merely that he must devote himself to the religious welfare of a great lady, hear her confessions, administer the sacrament to her, act as spiritual director for her, her children, her household, and all dependents. But in addition to all this and without neglecting it he must enlarge his field of service and minister to other souls who needed, in a spiritual as well as in a material sense, his alms, for that was what being an almoner meant. This giving of alms, absolute and total, would be the first rule of his

mission. To give, to give himself, that was how he must begin; give everything, his care, his time, his money, his thoughts, his days, his nights, his body, and his soul and give this to those who having nothing had therefore the most need: the poor of every description, poor in birth, in body, in health, in hope, poor in mind, and in soul.

What a task! we hold it up before us to examine it, as one holds a glass to the light to test its clear transparency. The task to the piercing vision of Vincent was clear, simple, attractive. Why worry over the difficulties, the disheartening problems, and heavy responsibilities, the weariness and blood and treasure, the human lives, the time, the endless time that such a marvelous work would take, time that perhaps would not be granted him; if these difficulties came, he would flick them off as one might an annoying fly. He had the faith of the poor and of the holy who beholding a mountain see only its summit. Aspire to move it? Absurd, mere human pride! No, the honest way is to climb it. Get yourself over by your own efforts. After all the mountain is yourself.

Vincent had no sooner thought out these ideas than he told them eagerly to Madame de Gondi and she, enchanted, not only approved of them but was willing to give the necessary backing to insure success. In this she was not alone. Her husband had a sister, Madame de Maignelais, whose name should be remembered and honored along with the greatest of the Christian ladies of the epoch. Although still very young she was widely known because of her misfortunes as well as for her virtues; she had been married as a young girl to Monsieur de Maignelais, whom she loved passionately and had lost tragically not long after their marriage, in the last days of the League. The husband, who was brave even to rashness, had loyally supported the King against the League; his politics offended Mayenne, who had him assassinated. From then on, with no attachments, expecting nothing from the future and turning away from all human affection, she had gone into retirement and, clad in double mourning, lived alone, close to God. She had, indeed, wished to give up both her name and her great fortune and withdraw from her own world to enter a convent of the Carmelites. Her family opposed this and her friends also, thinking very naturally that her proper cloister was the world and that there she could do the greatest good. She had nearly completed her plans,

however, in spite of their protest, when a letter from the Pope, who had been informed of her intention, made it necessary for her to give up Carmel; but it had taken the intervention of a pope to restrain her. Madame de Gondi found in this grief-stricken woman a close and ardent ally and the two women dedicated themselves without reserve to the great enterprise of Vincent de Paul.

Associations for Charity

Vincent began first to establish associations for charity; he did not intend that his charity should be at the mercy of every chance wind that blows. He proposed first to attack aggressively the entire problem connected with it, to regulate its distribution, direct it, and last of all assure its continuance for all time. His mind was working on the plan of an organization which should function smoothly and without interruption and this he could not realize without assistance. He intended to use all of his own powers but he was quite aware that he must harness others to the work. Each one of his assistants, if the work succeeded, must approach the task with Vincent's own ardor and personal touch. He counted much, perhaps wholly, upon private initiative, for without it nothing of value could be done. He did not consider this daily effort, which dedicated mind, heart, and soul to others, a virtue to be practiced by the rich and high-born alone; he demanded it of the poor also. Those whom he had helped must in turn aid others. Such aid might have to take a different form among the poor, but it should have a real expression and be given in proportion to benefits received.

It seemed to Vincent that to draw the rich to the poor, the poor to the rich, to make them seek each other out, learn to know and to understand each other, form sane, generous opinions of each other, in which there was neither severity nor a cringing spirit, but rather a new basis for esteem and friendship this seemed to Vincent not merely desirable but fundamental. Had not those who had inherited and those who had been cast off an equal need of each other? Alone, neither could accomplish much. Separated, they remained cold and without merit.

In this scheme what part would an association play? It would serve to bring them together, to give them a common purpose, to stretch out a friendly hand, and after they had come together offer an arm. The association would teach the practical work of charity and at the same time, as well, the duties, the responsibilities, the moral and social benefits of charity.

Rich and poor must have aims in common; there must be a side of

their lives that would touch, where they could feel that one class was the complement of the other, so that each would accept its place in life, the rich using their position with moderation and generosity and not confusing themselves with their riches, the poor accepting life without envy, bitterness, or acrimony. There was no other plane, as far as Vincent could see, on which the rich and the poor could meet as equals and be united in a fraternal union; it must be on the basis of that charity preached in the Gospels.

Vincent's problem was to reach men through the instrumentality of other men; to accomplish this, especially when he was dealing with the poor and touching human life on the quick, he knew that his surest aid would come from women. To them he straightway addressed himself. The Association of Ladies of Chatillon-les-Dombes was the first of the Associations of Charity; following this others were established on the Gondi estates, at Villepreux, at Joigny, at Montmirail, and elsewhere still others were started, all alike.

These associations have remained for so long a time models of their kind that one might fancy Vincent had spent much time and thought upon their organization. This was far from true. Quite spontaneously, without aid from others, the whole plan developed full-grown out of the charity of his good sense and the simplicity of his heart. Vincent made this plan the subject of his first sermons and expressed it in few words. He appealed to a group of upper-class ladies who had already met and accepted service under officers selected from their own number; he requested them that when word of any notable instance of poverty should be brought to them, they should go straight to the needy person in his own home and assist him by using their own private means; he begged his hearers not to consider that they had done their duty until they had established friendly relations with the person they were aiding, until they became to the needy person a friend, a member of his family, as it were, from whom he could well accept succor.

At this moment Vincent without knowing it had established a bureau of public charity it exists today and does what it can but we must not fail to understand that he had also created a deeper and more far-reaching organization, one that cares for every need and

has the greater chance of success in healing wounds because it alone, rising above even the best governmental agency, has an unfailing remedy: Christian charity, which takes from its divine Author its imperishable qualities.

Vincent's sermons were so successful that thirty associations were founded, one after the other. Madame de Gondi and her sister-in-law aided Vincent and accomplished wonders; under their influence the most varied members of society cooperated happily: ladies of quality, women of the middle class, shop-keepers' wives, servants, wives of artisans, and ladies of the court all worked together without any self-consciousness in this common task of relieving misery. No one rebuffed them, just as Vincent had foreseen. He knew in advance, too, all the faults of the poor; he knew their filthiness, their rudeness, their stubbornness at being helped, their downright maliciousness, and their low language.

In preparing his troops for action he had not spared them the picture of hideous wounds, of frightful maladies, of the constant danger from contagious diseases. This exhibition of the dangers to be undergone was only part of his plan to give driving force to those aiding him; they were made to understand that at all costs they must go forward, without reasoning, without hesitating. And so these brave and holy women went, accepting the terms. They walked through filth without thinking of where their feet led them, their eyes fixed on the clear and shining beacon of the ideal they followed. They "gave a hand to the poor," literally and without gloves. They bathed these unfortunates, combed their hair, lifted them up, remade their wretched beds, and then put them comfortably back in them; they closed doors and opened windows, swept their rooms, prepared their food and drink; they gave them, too, an inspiration to love and to hope, and dried their tears, brought smiles to their lips and refreshing sleep to the weary.

Madame de Maignelais constantly performed such services as these, clad in serge and coarse linen, she who in her brief career of joy and splendor had shone in gold and brocades. She sold her table services of silver and dined from earthenware, so that even when she ate alone she would be nearer the poor, whose meals she often shared and whom she called "her good people." She gave to the

poor her income, amounting to three hundred and fifty thousand livres, in our currency of today worth three times that figure. She was obliged to use a carriage to cover the long distances in Paris and its environs, but her carriage had neither lackey nor coat-of-arms; it was driven by a single coachman and was so plain that a successful merchant's wife would have been ashamed of it. Such was the daily life of this great lady.

Madame de Condi's existence was somewhat different. Unable to make such a complete renunciation as her sister-in-law, she compromised by separating her day into two parts. Early in the morning, as soon as she was dressed, she began her visits to the poor and sick; they were not the rapid flights made by some to satisfy technically "the demands of conscience," demands, we may say, that were very light; Madame de Gondi made genuine visits. She sat down and interested herself in the unfortunate person and looked after his physical needs; but she also asked questions, showed a sympathetic understanding, and did all she could to draw the person to an interest in and a touch with life. When her errand was finished she returned home, dressed as befitted her station, and presided at the table of Monsieur de Gondi. Afterward she directed gracefully the conversation of the drawing room, touching lightly on literature, or art, or the Court, on the affairs of Paris, and many other chance topics. She was at this time in ill-health, as frail in body as she was beautiful. Bearing this in mind one can guess at the heroism required to lead this twofold and exhausting life, even to carry on the conversation needed to enliven the two divergent sets of society that divided her days from her nights.

Although often sick and exhausted himself, Monsieur Vincent was active in training those whom he chose to be his followers. He made their tasks easy, or seem to be easy, by the extreme care, the touching solicitude with which he prepared them. Montaigne remarks that "life, grinds us between its teeth," but with Vincent the process seemed reversed; the work of grinding was his, both for himself and for others. He aided his followers to the uttermost, but always with the understanding that they aid themselves; he did all he could to lighten their burdens. Before he assigned them a task, it was so thoroughly "ground" and prepared that the work was already three-quarters completed.

In all of Vincent's organizations the first idea and the general form came to him in a flash of intuition; after this he investigated, reflected, examined patiently, then polished and re-polished. He never said: "it's perfect, now it's finished," not even when, in fact, it was. It is hard to believe to what a fine point he brought the art and science of perfecting a plan. He had a gift for extracting both from human beings and from things the best there was in them, a veritable genius for seeing the relation of the whole to the parts and regulating in accordance with this. The organization, the keepings of records, the disbursements, questions of lodging, clothing, and food all came under his supervision. He foresaw the problems that would arise, down to the methods of handling the poorest, the most sordid cases: how food should be prepared for these unfortunates and how it should be served, how they could be kept clean, the making of proper allowance for their age and for the season of the year. There were instructions to cover the special problems of children, women, the aged. He thought of a thousand little devices for amusing them; too serious an air was not to be assumed, since Vincent believed that gayety went hand in hand with virtue; he certainly conformed to this precept himself, for on his lips and in his eyes a smile always lurked, not a smile of fixed complacency but a smile that darted and sparkled from under bushy eyebrows, the mischievous smile of one who was both a Gascon and a sympathetic human being.

What seemed at once astounding was the calmness, one might say the presumption, with which he would embark on one of his cruises in the sea of benevolence, knowing the exact port for which he was steering. There were some who were amused by this and others who were startled and displeased. "What a good heart," they would groan, "but what a poor head! He is quite mad. But then he is a Gascon; he believes in himself. But how can he possibly succeed?"

Vincent let them talk and went his way. He seemed never to be too early or too late; he was never disturbed, never out of breath. Everything in its own good time; one arrives soon enough, if one does not try to go too fast! He often said, "You should not tread on the heels of Providence, but if Providence opens the way, you should run."

We have already noted that at Villepreux, at Joigny, at Montmirail, and in all the villages on the estates of the Gondi, various organizations of women were formed, more than thirty in fact; Vincent now extended his work by organizing brotherhoods of men to assist the deserving poor, while the sisterhoods would be especially concerned with those who had been forced out of work by old age or sickness. In 1620 at Folleville the first of these brotherhoods of charity had been founded. Once organized, the two groups, men and women, supplemented each other and, at times, combined for common effort.

Vincent de Paul with intense joy saw his work spread and deepen from day to day; he now planned to expand it still further, confining it no longer to country districts but introducing it into the cities. It was from the irresistible development of the work itself that this thought sprang; it was almost forced upon him. Vincent as the advance leader of a movement had a great and definite aim in view, but the movement itself, gathering force, threatened to pass beyond bounds and at times he was forced to put a check upon it, for he feared imprudent zeal might wreck his whole plan. He felt that haste, even when it seemed to bring results, was likely to produce a reaction.

But nothing could stop such a mighty human movement as this. The organization of Charity which had sprung from Vincent's heart, like a tiny stream trickling from a source, gathered force as it crossed the province that saw its beginnings; it was increased by all the generous rivulets of good will that came its way, until it enlarged its bed, became a stream, then an impetuous river, irresistible and yet always held in restraint by the skillful engineer who controlled its course. This movement, like a torrent that was gradually forming a huge inland sea, soon covered all France. The kingdom was flooded and the waters overflowed into Lorraine, Savoy, Italy, even to Poland. The followers of Vincent went through all this vast territory and in his name sought out and succored the poor of other nations, who to them, no matter what their country, were never "foreigners."

Vincent's Aims for the Poor

While the followers of the saint pushed his methods and his organization as far as possible, overcoming in so doing many difficulties and even dangers, they did not forget that the result which Vincent de Paul was most eager to attain was that of instruction for the poor: religious, intellectual, moral instruction. One began by aiding the poor and caring for them, but the work could not be allowed to stop there. The most important phase was yet to come. They must be taught, if it was their destiny to remain poor, to play their part with dignity. It was simple justice that they should be told their rights, but their duties should also be explained and urged upon them. Then too they must not feel that their misfortunes were final and irremediable; they must be told that to be respected among the best they need only respect themselves. In short the task was to educate the poor as far as possible, to enter by the heart and then pass to the mind. The intelligence of the poor was often only moderate and quite dormant, but their minds were capable of astonishing awakening and hearts that misfortune had seemingly hardened forever were often more easily moved than those endowed with happiness and sometimes melted at the first kindness.

Vincent believed that the practice of begging induced laziness and so encouraged vice, that it was the great obstacle in the way of salvation for the poor. He forbade it to those under his control, threatening to withdraw aid from them, and he requested his followers to refuse to give to beggars. His firmness on this point allowed no place for sentimentality. He knew his flock, their character, how they should be treated. No one had ever analyzed them as well as he. He could, when need be, catalogue their virtues, but this did not blind him to their faults, their subterfuges, their meanness; nor was he blind to the sordidness back of the misery. He pitied them but he refrained from putting this into words before them. He did not dress them up for the somewhat shallow pleasure of making them stand out as models of their kind. No, without cynicism but also without sentimentality, he valued them for what they were, unfortunate human beings. Always welcoming the opportunity for charity and never retreating before its flood, he yet

never allowed it to submerge or overwhelm him. He did not intend to be swept away by the poor but rather to remain their pilot. This apparent independence of sentiment which might almost seem coldness, only hid on the contrary his solicitude and care. Of all that has been accomplished since his day in philanthropy and in the amelioration of the lot of suffering humanity, Vincent de Paul was the creator.

All the great fundamental ideas, not merely of his own foundations but of the various organizations which have been conducted under other than religious auspices for the last two centuries, were furnished by him. Since better models did not exist, there was nothing to do but copy his. On the day when, after pondering the lines of wandering, homeless men, broken with fatigue and hunger, and sleeping without a roof over them, he felt the desire to provide them at least temporary shelter and decided "that a refuge should be opened where they could obtain food and a bed and on the following morning two sous when they left," he really then established the first night refuge. There are nowadays, to be sure, dormitories with hard-wood floors, beds, central heat, bath rooms, gas, and electricity. Excellent. But was not even this luxury with its resultant comforts the product largely of his vision? He was the pioneer who made this possible.

The son of a peasant-farmer, himself a former shepherd, he well knew how to profit by the lessons of his childhood. He knew that the charities of the city would have difficulty in maintaining themselves if they were not supported by the country and he therefore arranged for the brotherhoods in the country to purchase cattle and sheep which could be sold at a good profit and which would cost nothing for pasturage if the common pasture was used, as was then possible. "The flocks," remarked this former shepherd boy "shall be branded with the brand of the Association and be renewed every five years."

To develop in another way the resources of the city was very simple. He recommended the creation of work-shops where first the children and later all men, whether able-bodied or convalescent, could choose and, according to their skill, learn a trade and thereby gain a livelihood. There again long before our time Monsieur

Vincent inaugurated the sound and practical principal of paying by work for the shelter received.

It was not enough to show great ingenuity in planning such enterprises on paper or even at all costs to make them function. He must also, to secure their real success, make them appeal to the imagination and seem feasible, create a favorable opinion, a liking for them, an enthusiasm capable of putting them over. Vincent's ideas were, for his day, bold innovations and, even when launched by a man of his standing and experience, they risked a luke-warm reception, in which case they would fall flat.

Happily, he was understood at once; he had only to speak. Before he acted, he engendered enthusiasm. When he preached, it was never in the desert; he was acclaimed by clamorous multitudes. The crowds came to him and made him their prisoner. His modesty suffered from the publicity that his work brought him but the movement grew and gathered splendor with each new effort he made. It would take pages to record in detail all of his foundations. Some of these were hardly known until later, those, for instance, at Bourg, Trevoux, Chalons, Macon, where as late as 1846 there came to light from old archives the minutes of an assembly held on the occasion "when a godly priest in the service of Monsieur the Commander of the Galleys, filled with devotion and piety, taught us new methods of caring for and nourishing the aforesaid poor, both at Trevoux and in the other neighboring towns; and for the good of the town, we must profit by the occasion."

There and elsewhere, in many places that we know nothing about even yet, there must have been eagerness to profit by Vincent's plans. His self-effacement is one great factor in our ignorance upon this subject, for a once his work was installed, he was careful not to attach his name to it. It is astonishing that he is so little mentioned in the memoirs of the time, for he was already celebrated and venerated. Such minutes of assemblies and councils as we have quoted almost never mention him. To pass unnoticed was his great pleasure.

Of the two groups that he had planned, one for women, one for men, the former was the larger, either because women responded more quickly to the call, thanks to the passion women show for

dedicating themselves to service, or because the sweetness, charm, and delicacy of their services made them especially sought by those who needed them. The groups of men were negligible in numbers at first, but they increased with time and survived, which is in itself amazing, until the French Revolution. We have seen them come into existence again in this century, through an admirable organization called the Saint Vincent de Paul Society, which the guiding force of that genius who foresaw their existence continues to inspire.

This extraordinary man, who was so prudent in his plans for continuing and consolidating his work, had at this point especially taken upon himself the apostolate for the country districts. He desired to instruct and to sanctify not only those among them who were poor in the narrower sense of the word, but the poor of every sort, those who, although possessing the bare necessities of life, lacked yet the basic essentials of a moral existence, the poor creatures shorn of the solace of religion, of hope, of benevolence, of love for one's neighbor. To reach the hard of heart and the poor in heart was for him to reach the mountain peak of his desires. This most skillful of fishermen was interested by the poor of this type for, he said to himself, if these could be converted he would find among them disciples who would really reflect him, who would sow the grain of the gospel in fallow fields and cause it to spring up. As he had created missions, he desired now to creat missionaries.

Exhausted and brutalized by years of struggle and violence, either fired with hatred or fallen into shocking lethargy, the poor, properly so-called, whose numbers had increased with terrifying rapidity, and the other category of the poor in the villages, whose condition, though less crucial, was still very bad, made up a large and pitiful group deprived of both material and spiritual relief; and of the two the spiritually starved were quite as precious in Vincent's eyes, "because man does not live by bread alone but by every word which" ah, yes, it was this word, along with the daily bread, that Vincent wished to give, that they who were hungered might be filled.

It took four years for Vincent following his ideal plan to organize this congregation of priests to supply his Mission, but he realized it

in every detail. His patience was inexhaustible. One might almost say that with eternity in view he believed he already possessed it. He always had time. The carrying out of his great plan was moreover on a par with the rest of his genius.

The Scandal of the Hospitals

Vincent was as conscious of his distant responsibilities, which he gave the appearance of not noticing, as he was of the immediate duties which seemed to consume his whole time. At places that he could not reach he spoke either through messenger or by letter; although he may not have occupied the chair he still presided over their meetings. His presence was felt constantly by those who had need of him. Morning or evening, he missed nothing; at night, like a friendly and helpful ghost, he glided to the bedside that had called him. His peaceful shadow was thrown on walls, on curtains; it slid into dreams. He was seen in the recesses of damp cellars, under the leaky roofs of attics, in dark alleys that became habitable when he felt his way down them; in hospitals his hand lifted in benediction put a stop to blasphemies.

The hospitals of that time can not be painted in too lurid colors; they were infernos of horror and suffering. The plague was ravaging Paris. It showed no sign of abating. During the entire sixteenth century this plague had continued. It spread over France, but its chief center was Paris; the great doctor Ambroise Pare characterized it as a "calamity unleashed by the wrath of God, furious, relentless, the mortal enemy of man and beast, of plants and trees." All maladies were included under the name of the plague. In his Essays Montaigne describes the panic in his family and in the whole household when he came down with whooping-cough. "If any one had a pain in his finger it would at once be diagnosed as the plague."

Likewise all fevers, whether pernicious or mild, any ailment that one might have caught or believed that he had caught was instantly branded with this terrible name. To be ill was to be taken for a plague victim. The insufficient care for the condition of streets, or the total lack of it, propagated infection with terrifying rapidity. Everywhere were open sewers, refuse-heaps, decaying carcasses, mounds of filth, dry or liquid. There were no latrines; what draining there was became obstructed and was a source of contagion. The cemeteries were all too small and especially those near churches, which were most in demand, were quickly filled.

The frequency of violent and sudden death had caused bodies to be interred hastily, often at night, in cellars, or gardens, along highways; and so shallow were these graves that, when later the soil was turned, the spade would uncover bones or even strike into decaying human flesh. Such was the air Paris breathed, "a fetid, polluted atmosphere which depresses our spirits and our blood and engenders in us the deadly plague," wrote Abraham de la Framboisiere, one of the physicians of Henry IV and of Louis XIII. He ends his report with the brusque words, cito, longe, tarde, warning at the first symptom of the curse, "to leave quickly, to flee far away, and to be slow to return."

Measures for the protection of the public welfare were no doubt undertaken, but no one observed them. Did they even have the means and the time? The authorities limited themselves to giving admonitions that it was impossible to follow. There should have been a strict agreement between the doctors and the police resulting in the formation of a department of public health; instead of which the care and cleaning of the streets was let out to persons interested only in the money collected, or else the cleaning was required of property holders who were worse than the officials and often did nothing at all. The doctors were of no particular help in this crisis, for they lacked the professional honor so characteristic of our days; often indeed they lacked personal honor.

The terror which the word "plague" inspired made the people not merely cowardly but actually dangerous. The afflicted were not only a menace, they were one's worst enemy. One shuddered at nursing them; it was done with the breath held and the head turned away. We read in treatises of that day the precautions taken before approaching a victim. Underneath was worn "a shirt soaked in juices and in oils and saturated with seven different powders; over this was worn a great-coat of leather to prevent the entrance of the contaminated air." Besides this a clove of garlic was put in the mouth, a sponge in the nose, goggles over the eyes. It was hardly reassuring to those who were stricken to be attended by persons quite obviously in a state of terror almost greater than their own.

Hospitals at this time did not present the agreeable, fastidious appearance that the prints of Abraham Bosse would indicate. He

shows us carved four-poster beds with draped canopies under which we see the patient propped up against soft pillows, under sheets of dazzling whiteness, while he smiles up at the visitors of quality who bombastically address him.

Nothing could resemble less those charming, smiling pictures of the Dutch school, than these hospital wards, places so hideous that at the first sight of them one's instinct would be to turn and flee. Where are the canopied beds, the elegant basins of beaten copper resting on the floor and containing bottles which seem filled with cooling wines? Where are the polished woods, the waxed and shining parquetry reflecting the movement of stately robes? Instead, broken down, tottering beds, disgusting sheets, torn, filthy with spittle and phlegm, as stiff with dirt and dust as a ship's sails; and then the broken crockery, the vessels of tin and lead left uncleansed, the woodwork infested with bed-bugs (although these existed, to be sure, even in palaces and at the Louvre, in the bed of the King). Surgical dressings were taken off and allowed to unroll on the floor, which was itself filthy with mud, dry or wet, according to the weather. Visitors walked instinctively on tip-toe to escape the rubbish. Finally, in the shadow of torn curtains might be seen the patient, a poor creature devoured by vermin, displaying hideous wounds and deformities, and exhibiting upon a face now hardly human the stark anguish of a living soul clinging to life amid the wreck of a body from which he could hope only to escape.

This is not what is sometimes referred to as a gratuitous exaggeration. There is an official report which gives an account of the conditions in the wards of the Hotel-Dieu, the principal hospital of Paris. Victims of fever and of wounds, pregnant women and those in child-bed, those suffering from the itch, smallpox patients, were crowded together near the hospital morgue and the dissecting room. One might be born into this worst of worlds, or suffer its agonies, or endure the throes of death and die, or be dissected, all in the same place, and without a moment's privacy.

Beds intended for two persons, received six, three at the head, three at the foot; there was room for them only on their sides, none could lie on his back. If ever sleep was murdered, it was there. Fancy the suffering of these creatures thus entrapped, pressed close against

each other without regard to age or to malady, tainted with frightful diseases that spread from one to the other, mingling their fetid breath, their sweat, their tears, and all the wretchedness of their bodies, reeking and yet held fast by the coverings where they lay. And then the despair, the anger, the hatred that seized these wretches thus packed together, so that they sometimes clawed, bit, and fought each other. Some were found strangled, assassinated outright. The pallets were of feather or of straw and became unendurably hot when overcrowded. They were aired and re-made infrequently but even so they poisoned the atmosphere; to take them out of doors was to scatter infection while they were being carried down stairways and across corridors. When a surgical operation was necessary, the disconcerting preparations for it were made under the patient's eyes; surgery was then in a rudimentary stage and the horror of those who had to submit to it or watch it may be imagined.

There were also the dirty holes no more appropriate term could be applied to them where the clothing of both men and women was kept; clean apparel and the clothing of the infected were thrown together. Then too but why go on? Suppose we stop before the last horrors; they surpass those which we may seem to have taken too much pleasure in exhibiting to you. It has been, we are sure, useful, even essential to do this, for pity has often need of disgust; we must arouse you until you shudder, that you may see and realize conditions as they were. A few lines excellently and discreetly written, would, like gauze over a wound, have veiled the horror and left you uninformed, untouched, and perhaps unconvinced. In disclosing to you the cruel truth and at the same time giving you only a part of it, we have spared you much; and yet we have really misled you, for we have not disclosed the date of the picture we have painted, drawn from that vigorous official report. It was compiled in 1788 by the surgeon Tenon and printed by order of the King! It will be freely admitted that science has made steady progress in the matter of surgery, hygiene, and medicine, so that conditions in 1788 must have been better than in 1617. Remember then that we are to think of a state of affairs much worse than that described in the report quoted. The condition was such that the mind revolts and refuses to picture it.

And yet it was into exactly that that Vincent went every day, at all hours, dressed as he was. He took no precautions, he had no leather coat, no goggles, no mask, no gloves. That would have been quite too much for him. His patients first of all would not have liked it; they wished to see him, his cheeks, the deep and merry sparkle of his eyes, his big nose, his mouth, his knotted brow: in short they wished to see every feature of a face so loved, to see his hands too, worn as they were with service. Amidst all this hell Monsieur Vincent, the almoner, felt as happy and comforted, on his part, as those whom he aided. He told those who were eager to pity him and praise him for such work that he felt in the presence of these city unfortunates an especial pleasure, very different from his reaction to conditions in the country; service in the city, he said, was a relaxation, a diversion. He uttered this in complete sincerity but it did not prevent his arising one fine morning and returning to his beloved villagers to assure himself of their well-being.

The Greater Horror of the Prisons

In the hospitals of Paris Vincent had not, as he believed, reached the depths of human suffering. The connection of Monsieur de Gondi with the royal galleys brought to Vincent's mind the idea of getting in touch with the criminals who were under the jurisdiction of his friend. He taxed himself with having failed to seek out these unfortunates before this. He went to the cells of the Conciergerie and of the Chatelet where the convicted men were confined before being sent to a sea port. The doors were opened to him with a reluctance that he understood when he found what was hidden behind them; he left the prison in great anguish of mind.

Vincent could never blot out the memory of that first visit. The prisons were of two kinds: the first was underground, dark, moldy, and damp; a low, vaulted, tomb-like structure. The second had a little light, enough to reveal the terrible thickness and roughness of the walls and the unclean, dripping stalactites; it lighted up all the arsenal of barred doors, hinges, key-holes, covered wickets, bars thick enough for lions' cages; the windows however were left open to the wind, the snow, the torrents of rain that marked the winter season.

In both these prisons criminals devoured by vermin were crowded one against the other; they were attached like savage dogs to the walls by chains; rings bound their ankles and an iron collar about the neck held the chains which were so short that once fastened to the wall the victim could scarcely move. The weight of the rings and their tightness, the height and weight of the collar were a torture. These men were often afflicted with wounds which more completely covered them than did their clothing. They were of every age, from the young to the extremely old, although some who were young appeared old. Some had long, tangled, gray hair falling over their shoulders and white beards down to their waists; in their Job-like guise they appeared creatures of such wildness that one would have thought them captives imprisoned and then forgotten. And yet fallen, degraded by the vermin that possessed them, they still had a venerable air. Their companions helped them when they could and paid them the respect due to age. So even the dungeons

of old France had their patriarchs.

The majority were men in the flush of youth and strength, the very dregs of humanity, with brutal heads, low foreheads, heavy jaws, limbs of bronze, and muscles like those of boxers, which seemed capable of breaking the chains that held them. It was well that they were such, for the service in the galleys, for which they were destined, made demands upon their victims that were more than human. These prisoners did not all accept their fate in the same way. Some, overcome by their shackles, submitted dully; others raged at theirs like chained bears; there were those who refused food and drink, others who bit at their straw and would have devoured even human flesh, those who sang, those who yelled, and those who frothed with rage or shrieked with laughter. Not one wept. Not one prayed. All blasphemed. A few were insane and struck their heads against the walls or mutilated themselves. They lived under such conditions for weeks and months or for even much longer periods; no one thought about them, they were visited only by the hordes of rats that ran over their feet and the bats that coming down at night fluttered over their faces, or by the monstrous spiders that dropped down on them. It was, in short, hell, a veritable hell.

The first time that Vincent visited these convicts, they did not understand it in the least. Whence came this man, dressed in black, without sword, keys, or staff? A priest? How should they know? Most of them had never seen one or if they had it was so long ago they had forgotten it. The past and the future did not exist for them. There was just one thing, the present, unintelligible, but perhaps eternal. What did this new-comer wish? Might he not be, some thought with a flare of hatred, a chief jailer, more cruel even than the others they so detested? What would he do? Those who were not lying prostrate studied him savagely. One of those privileged visitors, perhaps a personage from the court, curious as to their vile condition and eager to examine it.

It is true that at infrequent intervals these prisoners were visited by persons of quality who had obtained the permission, despite the difficulties surrounding such a favor. They arrived in their rich attire, noblemen of high station and great ladies, several couples at

a time, under police escort, intent on enjoying their "party." But these parties never lasted long. The prisoners, exasperated by what seemed to them an insulting display of elegance, did not receive them politely. They either bombarded them with impudent requests and complaints, or in their argot they insulted them, railing at "the satyr's mustache" of one great lord, or the mantle "a la clysterique" of another, or the "fox's tail" that still another wore as a beard. Nor were the ladies spared, although they could at least laugh or blush under their masks.

With Vincent it was quite different. It was impossible either to mock him or to offend him. At first he caused astonishment and then at once commanded respect. They had a vague sense that in some way they knew him. He wore old clothes and heavy, dusty shoes. He had the appearance of being poor. Before he spoke he smiled and held out his hands. Who before had so greeted them? Then from his lips came an appealing voice that said to them, "my friends, my children." He went to them without fear, without shrinking; he touched their hands with his bare hands and then began to dress their wounds and gently to remove the vermin from their flesh. There was no time to be surprised, so stupefied were they. A few, frightened or defiant, shrank from him at first and resisted his skilled and tender hands. Then suddenly they would change and give themselves up with confidence to his care. Was it a dream? No, it was quite real; this was not only a priest who spoke consoling words but one who brought with him baskets of bread and food to distribute.

When the baskets were empty they noticed the most surprising thing of all: he seemed not to wish to get away and he made himself at home with them, was interested in their history, their names, the province where they were born, their former occupation, their family, their health he talked as easily as though he had all the time in the world. He sat on their wretched beds, on blocks of stone, on rotten straw; he lifted their chains to give them momentary relief. He urged obedience, courage, forgiveness, goodness. He showed them the crucifix that he had brought with him, the image of One who had suffered more than they, endured far more than all the captives and all the condemned in the world, and He was innocence itself. And if He had borne stripes, had been crucified as they could

see, and nailed to the cross, it was to save all men but especially to ransom sinners such as they. He had saved them and forever and this was done "for you" he assured them. No one had ever spoken to the poor wretches like this; they wished to see the crucifix, to touch it. Vincent put it in their hands. They examined it. Some were curious, others noncommittal, the greater number indifferent. A few seized it with the swiftness of a thief who grasps what he covets, their glittering eyes fixed upon it.

"Is it gold?" they asked, pointing to the figure of Christ in shining metal.

"No," replied Vincent, "it is copper, but it is of more value and more precious to me than all the gold of the Spanish galleons."

When one man, rebelling, refused the cross and threatened Vincent, the saint, quite undisturbed, thought to himself, "he will take it later." On his first visit, in less than an hour his conquest of these rebels was made; he had touched their stubborn hearts. When he left he promised to return; he could see the light of joy come to their eyes and flicker over the hard mask of their faces at the hope that he would. This joy was an expression not merely of their immediate gratitude, but also of their confidence and hope in what was to come. Before this visitors had never come twice, but now there was no question but that this visitor would return and return soon. They were not alone and forgotten. They had a friend. If they could have known what they were to receive!

Vincent left these prisons overcome with emotion. He had supposed that nothing could equal the horrors of the hospitals; he now found them surpassed by those of the prisons. Without a moment's hesitation he went straight to Monsieur de Gondi and, still shaken with emotion, told his friend in a passion of grief what he had seen. He did more, he overcame his dislike of eloquence and of strong language and made his revelation in realistic, passionate words that spared no detail. He was even moved to speak directly upon the question of a commander's responsibility for his men. "Ah, sir, consider these poor creatures who are under your direct authority. As you are their master on earth, so will you be held responsible for them before God. I do not deny that they have merited punishment, but human charity and your own integrity demand that they should

not be left in their present abandoned state, helpless, hopeless. Have pity upon them."

The appeal went home. As Vincent had said, Monsieur de Gondi was directly and wholly responsible for the state of his convict forces. What their condition was he suspected; yes, he even knew; and when he thought about it he was both grieved and mortified, for he was a just and a kindly man. The commander of the galleys authorized his almoner to take at once whatever measure he believed would be most useful in bettering the condition of these men. In giving such a sweeping order he both supported Vincent and helped to restore his own self-respect. His high position made it impossible for him to approach these criminals personally; even to show them kindness would be taken as a sign of weakness on his part. But he was relieved to be able to place them in Monsieur Vincent's hands, which he knew were more skillful than his own.

It was the saint's custom when he faced a new and urgent duty, never to consider just where the pursuance of that duty would take him. This was not because he feared that the extent and intricacy of the task would defer him, but simply because he considered it time and thought wasted, since results are usually the opposite of what one has planned for. So when he plead the cause of the galley-slaves with their commander, he did not care to determine the exact nature of his new venture. He followed, as usual, and without hesitation, the directing impulse of his own goodness.

Having intended merely to satisfy an immediate need, it was only later that he saw the full extent of the new horizon that was opening before him. The touch of his genius was such that when he undertook even a seemingly unimportant work, it at once took on an extension through him and because of him; it developed and was transformed by the magic of an inner growth derived from him. His charity was neither limited nor capricious. Its sweep was great and he followed it through with a clear head. He formed his plan just as soon as Monsieur de Gondi gave him authority.

Now that he was appointed the protector of the galley-slaves, visits to them were not enough. The prisoners must themselves be removed from their nauseating dungeons; Vincent's prisoners should have a home. He prepared for them a great house in the Faubourg

Saint Honore, and once he had them installed under wholesome conditions, he began to care for them, to soften the rigors of their regime. He did not try to make them admit the depth of their moral fall; he emphasized it as little as possible. There was no further talk of "damned in the next world," or "cursed in this."

Vincent's aim with these men was to persuade them that they had been saved by the Galilean, and that if they, galley-slaves as they were, wished to redeem themselves they could do it by repentance and obedience and could become even in irons men who, in the eyes of God and of Vincent who represented Him, had ceased to be criminals. They had become men who would be admitted with unshackled hands into the kingdom without storms, where they should embark upon that ship, commanded by Saint Peter, that sailed miraculously on, not impelled by oars.

And yet Vincent succeeded. The effect of his holiness upon these gangrenous lives was beyond belief. He approached them and the evil fled from them. These men, who were so hardened that they could shed blood without a moment's hesitation, trembled at the sight of their chaplain; when he spoke they shed tears as freely as they had once wrung them from others. All were moved. Many of them repented. More than one was converted. The court and all Paris were amazed; it was called a miracle.

Fashion mixes into everything and it was the mode of the moment to visit the prisons in order to see the wonderful work wrought by "this Monsieur Vincent." They came in numbers, very little to the liking of the former shepherd, who saw, not without some amusement, that even charity has its "sheep of Panurge." Little as Vincent relished the notoriety, he turned it, as far as he could, into the awakening of sympathy for his men, into a feeling of real humanity. In this he was successful. What had been only the passing whim of one day became on the next a work worthy of being pushed. Vincent, at once prudent and supremely daring, again saw himself surpassing the dreams of his heart. Madame de Gondi, Madame de Maignelais, other great ladies who knew him, and many who did not yet know him, hastened to his side eager to aid him in any way they could. Money was offered him before he asked for it. The Bishop of Paris approved of his ideas and recommended

them to the support of his diocese; in short Vincent created a movement that was a delight to him but whose administration would be most difficult for him.

Monsieur de Gondi loyally supported Vincent from the first, the success of the plan being a matter of personal pride and honor. The question of his men in the galleys became to him, their commander, a family matter; he wished to extend the Paris plan to all the galley prisons in the provinces.

Supreme recognition crowned the work. Louis XIII, in royal letters patent, by his own hand conferred upon him in 1619, on the 8th of February, "the office of Royal Almoner, with a stipend of six hundred livres a year and with the same rights and honors enjoyed by the other officers of the Navy of the East. His Majesty commands that the aforesaid de Paul in the aforesaid Royal office should henceforth be given rank and precedence over all other almoners of the aforesaid galleys." This important act made of an humble priest an almost official personage and placed under his power not only the galley-slaves in the prisons of Paris but those in all the convict prisons of France.

The first act of the new "Royal Almoner" was to visit the other convict depots under his jurisdiction. Here was another mission in addition to all the others, to say nothing of those that he knew the future would bring. He might have taken as his devise: "A missionary wholly and forever dedicated to missions." Did he measure the fatigues and the difficulties which such a trip involved? All the convict prisons in the kingdom! What a formidable tour of inspection! Vincent prepared himself carefully for the journey and entered upon it with joy in his heart as though he were of! for a pleasure trip.

The King had given him subjects and no one contested this kingdom with him wretched galley-slaves, forced by lash and club to live under duress. Ah, well, since they were his own people, countless in numbers and hopelessly condemned, a kingdom of slaves, he hastened to visit them, to take command of them, to make their acquaintance. He hungered and thirsted to carry to his kingdom the bread and wine of his presence. And since, alas! he could not break the chains from their bodies, he would strike the shackles from their

souls and free them. He started at once.

To The Galleys

The journey that Vincent now made, with frequent halts since he was no longer young, the convicts of the galleys made also, but much more quickly; not at the same time, perhaps, but whenever the orders called for the departure of chain-gangs. Vincent would have been glad to go with them. If he refrained, it was because he thought it not befitting the high office he now held.

From Paris to points on the coast where they were to embark, the galley-slaves went on foot, shackled about the neck and each carrying a weight in chains of a hundred and fifty pounds. Their food was a pound and half of bread daily and as drink they had water taken often from stagnant pools. They were surrounded by guards carrying clubs and thongs of leather, in addition to their weapons. It was the time-honored custom for these guards before the march began to strip the prisoners of their clothing, leaving them naked, no matter what the season, and to keep them thus an hour or two while they searched every stitch of their clothing and pocketed what they found there. The clothing was given back, torn and stiffened in the winter by the cold and then the order "Step lively, you fellows!" Those who could not march or follow quickly enough were prodded with muskets. There were wagons, to be sure, for the lame and for the sick, but the latter preferred not to call attention to their condition since they would be given a double ration of blows to determine whether they were really sick or merely pretending, in order to ride.

When they halted for the night, they were all pushed either into stables or left out of doors where they were made fast to the wall by their chains; they let themselves drop as far as the chain permitted and overcome with fatigue slept on the ground amidst the ordure of horses and cattle. In winter, for the sake of the warmth, they did not mind the dung-heaps; some even dug themselves in. At dawn of the next day the journey started again. Those who finally found themselves obliged to ask for places in the wagons received this favor only after passing the ordeal of the lash. Their ankles were freed from the heavy common chain, and to place them in the carts without halting the procession they were dragged along by the

chains attached to their necks, like dead animals, until they reached the carts, when they were picked up and thrown in. There they would fall like heavily loaded sacks against the wooden ribs which bristled all too often with nails. Their bare legs might be seen swaying grotesquely from the back of the wagon, and often they bled profusely. The passage of the chain-gang could, in fact, be traced in the dust by the red trail it left, like the drippings from a cask of wine. Those who were unfortunate enough to have asked once for the privilege of riding were never taken out. If any complained when they declared that they could no longer remain there, the order was given, "Smash them!" If they groaned too much because of their pain, they were beaten to death with clubs. A fifth of them died. Their bodies lined the fields along the route. "Let those who wish bury them!"

In this way the galley-slaves reached Havre de Grace, Dunkirk, or Calais, but by far the largest number were sent to Marseilles and reached that port in a state of exhaustion impossible to describe, distracted by itch and covered with vermin from which they had had no chance to free themselves. "They swarmed over us in such numbers," said one who had experienced the march, "that we could have spent hours taking them off by the handful."

Marseilles was the chief point toward which the great chain-gangs were directed. The convicts were at once divided among the thirty galleys kept at the port. This was the end of their march, but far from the end of their sufferings. A new life began for them, the end of which they could not see; it was so terrible that when memory had somewhat faded they longed for their old life. And yet!

But what were these galleys? We need instruction on the subject, just as Vincent did at first, for he knew nothing at all about them. And in this search we are not yielding to idle curiosity nor to a love for the picturesque. We have only to keep our own saint in mind; it is he who will pilot us.

In order to appreciate to the full the services and the sacrifices of the Almoner General, it would seem worth while to paint in its true colors the scene of his new labors. But the colors must be true, and one notes to begin with that two very different and incongruous pictures, the one dazzlingly brilliant and the other disturbingly

somber, are evoked by the word galley. On the one side one sees the sparkle of gold, royal banners flying, processional lanterns gleaming from velvet-colored standards, quaint sculptural figures, carved prows whipped in the wind by the flags of the navy, splendid with their fleurs-de-lis.

On the other side, rising, straining, bending, rows of backs, yellow, brown, and black; backs flecked with foam and running sweat, discolored by the blows of cudgels, and streaked with scars from the lash. And then, against the strains of fife and hautboy calling to the dance, the shrill call of the whistles and the grinding of teeth and of oars in the locks; the creaking of human bones as well as of ship's timbers. All that is glorious and all that is horrible, side by side, packed close, worlds apart and yet here made one! Together in this one craft, so graceful yet sturdy, powerful but swift, the highest nobility and the lowest dregs of humanity, in strange fashion made one, and so closely joined that they can not be uncoupled by the mind! One thinks of both at the same time.

Hark to the call: "To the galleys!" . . . Relentless sentence of justice. There follow the curses hurled by a cruel populace in the faces of the condemned as the chain-gang passes, the running fire of insults along the street, the storm of ill-will descending upon them at the least dispute.

"To the galleys!" as men once said "To Montfaucon! To the block!" and later "To the lamp-post!"

And again the call. "To the galleys!" a call to all that was brilliant and stately, to pomp and pride, to the glory of His Majesty's service and his power on the seas and to the privileges of his household, to the coveted right of His Majesty's gentlemen to reply to their fair questioners: "I, Madame? Where do I serve? With the galleys!" But the dual nature of this service is naturally best seen at sea, where the differences are most striking and rigorous.

The galley is a long boat, narrow and low, measuring from a hundred and twenty-five to a hundred and sixty feet in length by eighteen to thirty feet in width; it rides low in the water, especially amidships, where the rowers sit; here it is only three feet above the water line. Such is the appearance, at first sight, of one of these

boats, its two masts crossed with great lateen sails that are usually furled. At the prow of the boat are the five pieces of artillery, in the stern the canopy (carosse); beneath this, or under a small tent made of silk brocade or velvet, according to his wealth, sits the captain. From stem to stern extends, the full length of the boat, a long passage-way slightly raised, known technically as the coursie; this is the main artery of the galley, and it serves for the moving of the sails and for the constant walking back and forth of the officers. On each side of this "street," in another passage called the courroir running the length of the sides, sit the soldiers, happy or sullen, as the case may be. The rowers' benches, placed at the side of the boat at right angles to its axis, are provided with a calf-skin cushion stuffed with rough wool. Below the bench there is a foot-board to which one of the feet of the rower, the left, is chained; the other foot is supported, as soon as the oar is in motion, upon a plank stretching in front of his bench, called the pedagne. To each man is allowed eighteen inches of room and in the space between the two benches the captive sleeps on the hard plank where he sits. This completes what would be seen on deck.

The interior of the galley was divided into eleven cabins, which it is not necessary to describe. But we must not fail to give at least some idea of the way in which galley-slaves were made to suffer at their task. Each galley had two hundred and fifty rowers; there were five for each of the twenty-five benches which flanked either side of the boat; they were chained night and day. The five men occupying the same bench pulled together on the same oar. The oars were sixty feet, or about seventeen meters, in length; their weight made their management very difficult and called for great strength and skill. The complete group of rowers was called la vogue. There was no more contact between the officers and the oarsmen than if they had been in different worlds; the convicts were under the supervision and command of the galley-sergeant, who was always in the stern near the captain, and of two assistants, one in the middle of the central passageway, the other near the prow. Each one of these brutes had in his hand a lash, a whip, or a club. But one may be surprised at there being three of these implements. Was one not enough? No, since the punishment must be continuous, it could not be always the same kind or inflict wounds of the same nature; the victim would either be unable to endure it, or he would become

insensible to its pang; in either case the effect would not be the one desired.

A lieutenant and a sub-lieutenant, together with the pilot, a person of considerable importance, were, after the captain, the officers in command. After them, but less important than the galley-sergeant and his assistants, were what were called the argouzins and their helpers, who put the men in irons or released them, shaved them, punished them with the lash and the strappado, and if they had the good fortune to die, buried them. And then there were the scrivener, the steward, the surgeon, the gunners, and the priest of the galley, "who should have the purity and goodness that his profession requires and be wise and charitable and diligent in assisting the free as well as the poor prisoners, for all souls are equally dear to God." The priest must also, of course, hear confessions and have charge of divine services except that at sea mass was never celebrated.

Let us watch a galley about to put out to sea. The captain gives the order to sail; the galley-sergeant and his two assistants relay the order by blowing the silver whistle suspended from their necks. At once all the oarsmen, who have been seated, stand up, one foot on the footboard and the other on the plank in front of them, stretch out their arms, breath deeply, extend their bodies as far as they can and stroke all together. There are three beats to their stroke. At the first they stand erect, at the second they push back the oar-handle toward the stern, at the third they fall heavily back upon the bench, while pulling with all their force in the direction of the prow. Then the blade of the oar cuts the surface of the sea and sweeps with force through the water. The precision of the oarsmen is such that the fifty oars make but one stroke. Perfect order.

How broad and vigorous the rhythm! What clock-like regularity, backed by strong heart and ample chest! Neither haste, nor hesitancy. No jerks nor unevenness of pressure, nor sudden spurts now weak and now strong. The galley seems to skim the surface of the sea like some huge flying fish, its fins above water, springing up, exulting in both water and air.

Instead of one, picture six, or eight, or ten of these beautiful galleys starting out together, ranged in "caravan" formation, at their head

the most beautiful of them all, quite appropriately called the Royal Galley. This, in 1620, Monsieur de Gondi commanded in person, "to give chase to the corsair crews of barbarous countries that were pillaging the coasts of Spain and in the year following, 1621, to enter the waters of the Atlantic."

When the fleet left port a crowd packed the quays. Windows and balconies were filled with other groups. A sudden signal, and instantly the salutes of honor, the salvoes of cannon and ringing of bells, with much general excitement and special joy on the part of the women, and of the children who were lifted up at every vantage-point, even perched on the roof-tops. A stone's throw away, down in the harbor, the captains and other officers were gathered under their tents; one could see them in their gold braid and red coats with the large pockets, saluting from a distance, lifting their black cockaded hats, and carrying their batons jauntily like canes; some were gazing through field-glasses.

The boats were a-flutter with decorations and draperies, dazzling with the brilliance of taffeta and damask, of bunting, purple and snow-white, flung to the air and exulting there; flags and banners floated, marked with the royal insignia; pennants dropped from the mast-head and swept the deck with their double-fringe of gold. This fluttering, billowing mass was supported by a network of silk cords stretched from mast to mast and from yard to yard, gathered in rosettes with streaming ends that whipped the air like slings or swung in rhythm like censers.

All this beautiful and ceremonial appearance was kept up while the galleys were in the harbor, and the city in gala mood was looking on. Once out of sight of land, the boats took on suddenly a sinister aspect. The officers had had enough of parade and retired to the tent or to their consultation room. The galley-sergeant and his assistants now were the great figures; they ruled the boat. It was their turn.

"Now for a rain of blows!" thought the galley-slaves, on their side, with a dreadful shudder of apprehension.

"Faster," came the command.

The response was immediate and they raced through the water with the speed of a horse at gallop. But the cost was terrible; the blows of the lash and of the clubs were applied with all the force of the arm upon the helpless backs, those impersonal, passive, numbered backs, which were shaking from top to bottom and vibrating like drums.

"Still faster!" was the captain's order. At this call for "full force ahead," a movement of savage, enraged energy swept the crew and, one might almost say, unleashed them, giving their exhausted limbs a momentary suppleness and freedom to meet this new demand. To keep up their courage, or perhaps to smother their rage, they howled, sang, laughed madly, in the agony of their torture, until

"Put in the gags," came the terrible, dreaded command.

Around the neck each man carried a thick piece of oak bark which was put between the teeth as a gag to prevent talking. This punishment they dreaded above all others and yet they were so disciplined that at the word of command they put in the gags and rowed on in silence. Their oaths and blasphemies were now swallowed although they nearly strangled them, but they rowed on. Never did they row better. They knew the punishment must be removed soon or they would smother. They were patient. It was indeed necessary.

However no matter what their fate at sea, they preferred it a thousand times to imprisonment on shore. Here, at least, they breathed again, out in the open air, in the sunlight, the wind, beneath night and the stars. They had the burning heat of the sun, but also its warm caress. The whip of the keeper felt less degrading in the open air than between the walls of a prison. Then there were the sky and the distant horizon which more than one beheld with homesickness; there was stir, there was action. They were restless themselves, and round them snarled and struggled others. As though it were some echo of their own rage they were pleased and soothed by the fury of the sea, which carried them in its bounding course toward battle and the unknown. The sea alone seemed to understand them. In spraying them with her foam she bathed them, strengthened them, fortified them. Their work at the oar, even under duress and hateful punishment, gave them at moments a kind

of intoxication which liberated them. Each stroke of the oar, well executed, perfect, strong with the strength of despair, expressed their yearning for deliverance and was a step in the direction of freedom. To pull an oar it meant to cease thinking, in some measure to escape, to advance toward something, rushing upon it to be off. They were bent low, but only to rise again. They suffered, they lived a tortured life, but they lived!

What was known of all this, of the galley-slaves themselves, by those above-deck? Practically nothing. Their position in the 'depths of the ship and their condition as slaves forever bent over their tasks, to say nothing of their chains, kept them always where it was difficult to see their faces. Of those who might have seen them, the officers and their subordinates, the former ignored them; for the captain and those in command with him, they simply did not exist, they were chained beasts, rowing animals, the disciplining of whom was the work of the subordinates. Why should those in high command so much as lower their proud eyes or, for even a moment, their proud thoughts to this vulgar herd crowded beneath their feet. It was quite enough to submit to its displeasing proximity. Instead of trying to see them they attempted to avoid them, to forget them, feeling the disgust for them that is naturally excited by the proximity of vermin.

But the galley-sergeant was an immediate and ever-present terror. One of the regulations of the service prescribed: "At his command let the galley-slaves tremble." He kept a constant watch, lay in wait for them, was ready with his blows. As he himself was under observation, he could not relax his vigilance for an instant. "During a voyage," ran another regulation, "it is not allowed to sleep at night." This meant only snatches of sleep, broken uneasy snatches.

What is to be said of the galley-sergeants' assistants and their kindness? These under-officers knew the men better than any one else on the boat. They recognized them by their faces? No, by their backs, those backs upon which they cracked their whips, those well-known backs whose muscles were for them like the features of a face, whose scars emphasized the personality and identified the man quite as surely as his face would have done. Faces hardly counted here. Heads were shaved and only a tuft of hair was left on

the crown; the mustaches were left long so that all had a curious resemblance to each other. They were half naked, or clad in rough woolen jackets and red caps, red being the predominating color used on the boat, above deck in silk, below in wool, red for every one, even for the fittings of the boat.

The personality of a rower could hardly stand out under such conditions and in such costume; like lepers they were "forbidden to lift their eyes to the officer who addressed them."

Thus it was that on the galleys one knew and admired and greeted only what was splendid, gilded, brilliant, only the glory and the pomp.

But all that which was below, which one did not see: the sweat, the blood, the festering sores, the irons, the hatred and suffering, the real life in the galleys, in short, which was quite another shade of red it was all this that Vincent wished to see.

Vincent at the Galleys

As soon as he arrived at port, Vincent went straight to the quay where the galleys were anchored. Going at once on board, he descended immediately into the hull and began his slow progress from captive to captive, neither shrinking from them nor fearing them. He scrutinized each one, looking straight into his eyes, for he induced them to look at him so that he might penetrate "into those depths where he knew life exists."

"What does he want of us?" they said, not understanding him and waiting for his next move.

Vincent questioned them. He did more; he listened to them, and with supreme patience. Their wrongs? He admitted them. Their rebuffs? He submitted to them. He leaned forward, much moved he had seen their chains and pitied them.

"My poor children. These are your chains? Ah, yes. Hold! Lift them up!" And they raise them and exhibit them with the complaisance and pride of slaves. He guessed their thought:

"Ha! Who beside us could carry such weights? No one! No one in the world! It takes strength. We are the galley-slaves, the criminals who can endure the galleys."

Vincent agreed, admired their strength; he lifted the chains and kissed them. A startled movement passed through the captive group. He has kissed the chains, the chains upon a galley-slave! An unbelievable thing! Such a thing has never been seen before! Is he mocking us or is he a fool? And yet in some strange way they felt that in kissing their fetters he had caressed those who wore them; and he did caress them, these hardened galley-slaves, and with such words of kindness as broke down all their resistance. Some of the most abandoned of them who had never wept, felt for the first time a warm flow on their cheeks and wondering if it were blood soon realized that it was "Monsieur the Almoner of the Galleys," who wept with them. If they were about to eat, he shared their pittance and drank from their cup the brackish water served them.

Arriving at the time of a flogging, he would halt it and secure pardon for the victim. Moreover, never once did any officer venture to inflict in Vincent's presence a punishment that had been meted out to one of his "children." He was aware of this and so were the men. They wished to persuade him to stay with them as long as possible, but it was unnecessary since he intended to do just that: when he left he promised to return soon. As he mounted the deck, he looked back upon the more than two hundred upturned faces which, while so hideous in themselves, reflected the light in his face.

Vincent gave to the captain and to the officers of the boat his most respectful homage but without relaxing for a moment his vigilant care for those over whose souls he was the captain. The conversation, whether long or short, concerned their welfare alone. Vincent plead for them. The captain was likely to be a man open to appeal, willing to be humane. Furthermore under a silken tent it was easy to make silken promises. But with the galley-sergeants and his assistants it was another affair; they were as hard as flint. Vincent would approach them and taking them apart hold their hands warmly in his own, embracing them, his head upon their shoulders. Below deck, he had touched the chains; here, it was the club and the lash that felt his hands but he placed no kiss upon them.

"Ah, my friends," he sighed, "feel the weight of this oaken club, and these great knots in the whip, this lash; how hard and cutting they are, what agony do they not cause!"

"Not so hard with them, if you please," he would urge them pleadingly, and then, "you will wear yourselves out!"

To the sergeant in direct command he made his most passionate appeal:

"I beg of you, my friend, spare these poor captives. You will have pity upon them, will you not, my man?" He used, but in gentleness, the name by which the captives should call the galley-sergeant, for, as Vincent pointed out, this friendly term was used in the royal orders to create a more kindly bond between the galley-slaves and those in authority over them, to give greater confidence to the

prisoners and to remind the guards that, without any ill will, they were to be truly their man, and not their cruel keeper.

This work went on during that heroic period between 1620 and 1623, when the galleass, the galiot, and the brigantine made unremitting warfare upon the polacre, the tartan, and all the other ships of the Grand Turk, where on waters furrowed by the Genoese and the Venetian fleets, by the galleons freighted for the Levant, and by the shipping of the Portuguese and the English, our standards were everywhere respected and saluted on their victorious return. Not a day passed without its frequent cannon shots or musket-fire. Often there were so many dead lying on the decks that they were hastily covered lest the grim sight should affect the new recruits, who "had never danced to such a tune."

Whenever possible Monsieur de Gondi took personal command of the galleys, sailing with the flag-ship under the royal colors. In 1620, his fleet, augmented by six galleys from Spain, descended upon the Barbary coast, and again in 1621. In 1622 they were at the siege of La Rochelle, a fact which raises an interesting question.

Was Monsieur Vincent with the fleet during these campaigns? Most surely not, for despite the silence that his own modesty would have enjoined, the fact would have been somewhere officially recorded. On the other hand one would be equally at fault in thinking that the almoner of the fleet, who took so to heart his responsibilities, would never have gone to sea with his charges. He feared neither the sea nor pirates, and he was exactly the man who would wish to know at first hand just what the life of the convicts on the galleys was.

There is a famous story concerning Vincent and his chaplaincy but, well-known as it is, we do not hesitate to tell it again.

When Vincent first went to visit the galleys at Marseilles, he wished no official welcome and also wished to study the exact state of affairs; he therefore went incognito. One day during the visits he was making to the boats he found a convict in despair at having been torn from his wife and children whom he was leaving in abject poverty. How could he help this man? Anxious, and quite as much disturbed as the galley-slave, he hastily sought some plan of relief, but could think of no solution. Suddenly an idea came to him, a

veritable inspiration from heaven, it seemed to him, and he went to the officer in charge of that division and requested that he be allowed to exchange places with the convict in question. The officer surprised, perhaps intimidated, or even sympathetic, consented.

The irons were still warm from the convict's body when they were fastened upon the legs of the saint. He took his place upon the bench and grasped his oar in the midst of the galley-slaves who were amazed at his devotion but accepted his presence with joy. The convict who had been freed was wild with gratitude toward his unknown savior but dared not express it, lest everything should be discovered; he disappeared with his family, while Vincent, happy in his departure, pulled on the fifty-foot oar in silence with his four companions. Vincent must have been happy, and, if we may use the expression, maliciously happy over his stratagem. It was the joy and warmth of Gascon malice in his heart which made him appear in his own eyes to be performing an act of little merit.

"Well," he may have said to himself quite simply, as he went through the three movements of the oarsmen, "after I wore chains in Tunis, I thought I had escaped from them forever. What a mistake! My Father has brought back to me the old chains; He wished me before to be for a little while a slave; today I am a convict at the oar, no doubt because I need to learn what it is to be a galley-slave. This oar is the cross He asks me to carry. May it be blessed! Pull!"

The galley slipped smoothly and swiftly along. The royal standards fluttered. From the officers' tent came the sound of fife and drum. Vincent agonized by the irons on his legs, endured the rough, filthy red cap on his head, exposed every minute his naked back to the punishments of the galley-sergeant and his aides, who could from their elevated position easily catch him with one of those terrible lashes of the whip that they distributed at random, and which Vincent would have accepted with an "amen" without betraying his presence. The picture unnerves and frightens one.

This wonderful story, we know, has been rejected as fiction or as something impossible, even by authors who follow Vincent with admiration. We, along with other biographers of Vincent who have studied the story, accept it as true.

"It was only after several weeks," says one of these, "that Vincent was recognized, and it might have been still longer, had not Madame de Gondi, who had grown uneasy at receiving no news of him, instituted an investigation which resulted in his being discovered. This incident was still recalled at Marseilles when the priests of the Mission were established there, more than twenty years later."

This well-considered opinion, delivered a century ago by Monsieur Collet, founder of the Congregation of the Mission and of the Daughters of Charity, has been given added weight by the conclusions of one of the latest and most authoritative of the biographers of Saint Vincent, Monsieur Emmanuel de Broglie, who finds nothing at all in the charge of "material impossibility" in the story.

"We may assure ourselves on this point by referring to the correspondence of Colbert, so well analyzed by Pierre Clement, concerning the royal galleys and their convict crews. We find there that thirty years after the period in which we are interested, after the time of Richelieu and Mazarin, in the early reign of Louis XIV, when Colbert was his astute and painstaking minister, official records show that no scruples were felt in keeping at their benches convicts who had over-served their terms for one, two and even more years, in fact, as many as twenty years, according to the needs of the service."

If such things could happen under Louis XIV, it is not surprising that in the moment of confusion following the regency of Marie de Medici, during the Thirty Years' War on the one hand and the remnants of civil war on the other, such a substitution of one person for another might have happened, especially since it happened quickly, on the impulse of the moment, was followed through at once, and was not of long duration.

But why search further when the important and, in our eyes, the surest proof is furnished by Vincent himself. One of the members of the Mission was bold enough to ask Vincent toward the end of his life if the sores on his legs, from which he had suffered for more than forty years, were not due to the irons that he had once worn when he took the place of a galley-slave. Vincent only smiled,

turned the conversation, and made no direct reply. If it had not been true, he would have contradicted the story with indignant warmth. He would never have admitted it. But he could not truthfully deny it. His smile and his silence, however, condemn him. They are more convincing than frank admission.

Creative Achievements

He Delivers a City

One of Vincent de Paul's griefs was the publicity that seemed, in spite of his efforts at secrecy, to surround the good works he did. He was forced to escape from the curiosity of which he was the object and from the testimonials of gratitude which were so eagerly accorded him. His brief service as a galley-slave had showed him the horrors of the life spent by convicts at sea; he promised himself to set to work at the task of relieving it, but he was prevented by the notoriety caused by an action which, in his own eyes, seemed very simple and natural. Each time that he had to retreat from a good action he reproached himself with being the author of his own rebuffs. And so it was in this case. He found it necessary to leave Marseilles, which was no longer the port of call for the galleys in these troubled times, since he ran the risk, if he stayed longer, of finding himself stranded there with no work to do. He therefore began a hurried journey back to Paris.

He was journeying by long stages on foot, when he halted, it goes without saying, for a work of charity. It was at Macon. He had come upon the surprising sight of a greatly excited town, which had been in a state of siege for some little time at the hands of a band of frightful beggars, a drunken, obscene crowd that had thrown the town into disorder and even terror. Such was the boldness and brutality of these bandits that the citizens of Macon did not know how to get rid of them. They feared a reign of terror, for even now at the slightest provocation blood was shed; and these murders were followed by pillage, rape, arson, all the horrors of war.

Vincent had gone that way alone, unarmed, and had come suddenly upon this mob of the vilest creatures that pressed around him and nearly smothered him. It was a time when one might easily lose his head and attempt flight. Not so Vincent. He had understood the situation at a glance; these men were not hardened criminals, nor bandits by profession, but beggars of the roadside who had been driven by hunger and misery to attack a town.

Vincent knew beggars well and knew also how to handle them. Should it be by force, or by prayer? By neither! The one stratagem

by which to catch them unawares was that of kindness. "They too," he thought "are a form of galley-slave." So he neither abused them nor preached to them; he pitied them. He pitied their distress and told them he wished to relieve it. As was his habit, he touched their wounds gently, he examined and assisted the sick. He caressed the children, smiled at the mothers, and to prove his compassion and sincerity, he said "that he saw they also were, like himself, travelers, and had met enemies and been despoiled, that he would promise to remain with them and not to leave the town until succor had reached them and they were in a happier situation."

The wretched crowd, believed his words and were quieted. They thronged around him, a great flock now docile under the new shepherd they had found. All that remained for him was to keep his flock in hand. But Vincent had a genius for just that sort of thing. He divided them into two groups, the beggars and the unfortunates, each to be cared for by two Associations of Charity, one for men, the other for women, established after the model of his Associations of Charity. Thanks to the work of these organizations the appearance of the city was transformed in a fortnight. The streets were orderly. Peace settled in the homes, minds were no longer in alarm, all the poor, some hundreds of them, were housed, fed, and cheered by public charity.

To whom but to our saint was all this due? Once more public gratitude took such form that Vincent was forced to make his escape. In a letter he writes, "All shed tears of joy. The magistrates of the town did me so much honor, that to avoid their praise I was compelled to depart in secret." This did not prevent Vincent's returning when he was needed, but always unheralded and quietly. When it was thought he had definitely gone, he would return for a week, a day, an hour.

"Where is he?"

"Some one has just seen him."

Then no sooner was his presence known, than he was gone; he, the constant shepherd, was swallowed up like a shadow. When he left, they might find that he had slept on the straw in some stable.

When the reconstruction work was over at Macon Vincent started again toward Paris where he wished to be with his poor, but again he was turned back. He had never been allowed to do what he wished, and it was for that reason, as has been said, that he took good care not to have, by anticipation, a fixed will of his own. And yet, in spite of all that, his will was fixed and unalterable that he, Vincent, should have no will; he could only follow with confidence and energy the plans that conflicted with his own and in which it pleased him to see the will of God.

The fleet of ten galleys under the command of Monsieur de Gondi was to winter in Atlantic ports after the siege of La Rochelle. Vincent went to Bordeaux to institute there, as he had done at Marseilles, an investigation into the conditions among the galleys. He feared he could not complete the work alone and obtained from Cardinal de Sourdes, Archbishop of Bordeaux, twenty priests to assist him in the enterprise. He selected them himself and at once instructed them in their duties and placed them, as soon as possible, two on each galley.

They were his spiritual subordinates while he was galley-sergeant, Captain, and Commander, of the forces of Charity. He thus multiplied himself throughout the fleet, giving his attention, his word, his heart to these men, whom he taught to believe in God and to pray, and even to love, insofar as this was possible for galley-slaves.

If Vincent could not entirely succeed in teaching the difficult lesson o love for one's neighbor, he knew how to make himself loved far above any other man. To those wretches their neighbor was Vincent, and God, too, was represented by him. He won them, he remained their friend, a father with the heart of a mother; he obtained for them what no other person could have done. When he was on the boat the officers no longer knew these quiet rowers. When he spoke they listened, an attentive flock. One of them, a Turk and a bigoted Mussulman, renounced Mahomet to become a Christian and dedicate himself to the service of Vincent. This convert, who received in baptism the name of Louis, followed his preserver everywhere and long survived him, inconsolable at having lost him.

A Visit Home

At Bordeaux Vincent was not far from his old home, which he had not seen for twenty-four years. His aged mother was still living, and his brothers and sisters as well. It was neither lack of affection nor forgetfulness that had kept Vincent away. He was goodness itself, and he loved his family with all the deep affection of a country boy: an affection that has fewer means of expression that that which is found among the city-born but which is profound and sincere. If he had remained away all these years it was because he did not trust his own heart.

This modest man who could, as we know, divorce himself from his personal wishes so far as to appear even irresolute had in certain matters, and especially in what concerned his mission, a will of iron. An apostolate such as his did not, he was convinced, permit of family attachments. It was precisely because his heart was strongly drawn by these connections so natural and proper and allowed to others, that in his own special case he felt constrained to free himself from them entirely. He made no pretense of breaking these ties altogether as such a sacrifice was not asked of him, but he did not wish to be moved or to be held by them. From the moment of his complete renunciation he dedicated his life to the service of God and of the world, including in that world his parents, to whom his inflexible integrity did not keep him from giving a special place in his devotions.

Great souls are gifted with a pliability which comes to them from divine grace and which enables them to reconcile in God, without any difficulty, emotions that seem contradictory; the two kinds of tenderness instead of diminishing each other, found thus a means of growth. After all these years Vincent was now sure of himself and decided to revisit his family. Following the severe discipline he had undergone, he was now filled with joy at being able to approach his home again without fear. He was yielding to his heart's long suppressed affection; but the stronger and even loftier motive for his visit was to see whether the piety of his family had lessened with the years and, if it had, to strengthen it. He was ready at once to urge them not to forget their humble condition in life, not to be

proud of any titles and honors he had been obliged to accept, but to cherish their own way of life. He declared "once for all that being able to live as they had heretofore, by the work of their own hands, they must expect nothing from him."

Such language and conduct might seem surprising, but they are in keeping both with the religious rigor of the time and with the character of the great almoner who had given himself to God without restriction. He had accepted poverty for himself, and he would have thought it robbing the. poor to give either his time or his work or his money to relatives who, in his opinion, did not need his help.

All biographers of Vincent have left us the same touching account of his return to his native soil. He did not stay with his mother evidently because he distrusted the emotional strain upon him if he lived even for a few hours in the house that saw his birth. He lodged with the cure of Pouy, his friend and relation, who was indeed quite confused at the honor of receiving him. During his short visit with his family, he led his usual daily life of piety and mortification. He found many changes there but in spite of his increased years and the honors they knew he had received, his family found him not at all changed. He seemed to them the same marvelous child they had always known.

Vincent was already beginning to turn gray. How true it is that the moments seem to fly more rapidly, the more precious they are to us! The few days he passed at Pouy were quite too short for what he wished to do. He filled them from dawn until dusk and sometimes until still later. Moved by memories, he ate and slept little; even during the night his mind returned to events of the past that seemed as yesterday; he tasted their freshness anew.

His soul, thus drenched in memories, brought zest into everything. He saw again the forest of his boyhood, and the meadow, saw other sheep in the flock and another dog who ran to him as though recognizing him. He breathed the air that blew in from the coast, slipped off his shoes to walk barefoot in the sand. He sat down, he dreamed, he prayed in the woods. The Adour flowed by, always clear and unchanging per scecula. The sky was pure. Everything

had about it a look of eternity. In the dark blue of the night sky he saw the same stars shining with the same formidable and thrilling light that shone down upon the galley-slaves couched amidst their chains.

Vincent knew that this was a last visit for him. His native province, his mother, his relatives he would never see again. Everything betokened separation. Farewells surged through his heart and brain. He embraced only to leave. The time to depart came at last.

He went on this final day in pilgrimage from the church of Pouy to the old chapel of Notre-Dame de Buglose, where as a young shepherd he had so often prayed. His family and all the neighbors accompanied him to this place, which was more respected than ever because in 1620 the famous statue of the Virgin, its patroness, had been set up again. The statue had been found by a little child, a shepherd boy like Vincent, who had discovered it in a marsh where, more than fifty years before, it had been hidden by devout persons to protect it from the fury of the Calvinists; it only awaited the simple miracle of the coming of a thirsty cow for water. In this chapel, with its Virgin restored, Vincent said mass.

After mass he gathered all his family for a frugal and intimate meal. They were already suffering from the thought of his leaving; he addressed to them the last words they were to hear from him, his suggestions to them, almost his testament. He begged them to remain throughout their lives in the simple state in which it had pleased God to place them. He gave them his blessing and without any show of weakness told them good-by, forever. But when he had really gone from them he felt alone, more alone and solitary than he had ever been in his life, even when a slave in Barbary; his heart would not be stilled and he gave way to a grief that he could not restrain. Later to his brothers in religion he blamed himself for his conduct as though it were a fault:

"The day that I left I felt such grief in parting from my family that I wept as I walked on my way, wept almost without ceasing. To these tears succeeded the thought that I should make them presents to one of them this, and to another that; my bruised mind was busy dividing among them all that I had and also, alas, what was not mine!"

Seized with scruples, with regrets, with remorse, he at times did not know which impulse of his heart to follow or where his duty lay. When he thought of the poverty in which he had found his family and in which he had left them, he taxed himself bitterly with his unkindness, and the next moment he judged himself severely for allowing matters of family sentiment to divert him from God. For three months he wrestled with the problem of whether he should go to the material assistance of his brothers and sisters. With time and reflection, which with him was always a form of prayer, he chose the better part, that which cost him more, resistance to the instincts of his heart. He was not alone on this hard path, for God was there and took from him the half of his burden. Thus he says with an accent of profound gratitude, "*God took from me this tenderness for my family*, and although they have since been forced to receive aid, and may again be, He gave me the grace to commit them to His bounty and to think of them as happier than those who had been well supplied."

However severe we may think Vincent was toward his family, we should seek to understand him rather than to blame him. We are dealing with a saint and saints have standards of behavior higher than those of other men. They are preoccupied with obligations and tormented with superior demands which are beyond our understanding; they have a special vision of their duties, they receive commands not given us, which they must obey. Their natural affection has been transfigured into divine love. They love, but their love is perfected in heaven, not upon earth. They move, in short, in the infinite, which is their proper sphere. They place their loved ones under the protection of God, showing their confidence by their trustfulness; God is more touched by this than if they had concerned themselves with this task. They are really more certain to assist and even enrich their families by this appeal, than if they heap all possible favors upon them.

On the other hand, could he surely answer for the character of his brothers and sisters, could he be certain of their discretion? Were they wholly unselfish and disinterested? We do not know. It is possible that Vincent who knew their character and the bent of their nature feared his bounty might encourage in them a desire for ease, that he feared also he might be placed later in the position of

having to refuse too frequent demands upon him. Rather than that this should happen, he would prefer never to have helped them.

Saints are positive and peremptory it is ordained that they should be so; it does not come of themselves. When Vincent prayed for his family, he was well aware of the efficacy of his prayers. He knew that, if answered, they were of more value than all the wealth of the world. He was moved by this feeling when he left them so quietly, never to see them again. He realized that this world is only a passage-way into an eternal life where there will be no farewells.

When Vincent completed this last sacrifice, he was left in a state of complete detachment, stripped of everything, absolutely humble in spirit, free, and master of himself, as only he can be who possesses nothing, not even himself. Wholly dedicated now to relief of human misery, he is about to plunge with joy and with his whole soul, into the great plans about which his vow centers.

The Mission

Up to this time Vincent had always clung tenaciously, in small things as well as great, to his practice of relying only upon himself for the supreme effort of carrying out his plans; he might have depended on others and failed, as he knew; his desire to work within the strictest limits of economy had also confirmed this habit. With a little effort, Vincent could have found those who would have offered their aid to him without pay; but just because of their offering it, he felt himself bound to reward them in one way or other. Even a little was too much for his resources, which were strictly limited. As for himself, there was no question of payment or of adjustment or of the slightest consideration. It was his desire to offer himself as a living sacrifice, but himself alone, not along with others. He was by nature independent, his plans were original with him, he was attached to them and believed in them and wished to remain in complete control of their execution.

Vincent was a born executive, one who could direct anything, a person, an entire city, a human conscience, whether that of a queen or of a criminal. He was now so burdened by the tasks and the responsibilities that increased upon him daily, that he feared they would break him and he was forced to accept the advice that Madame de Gondi had been pressing upon him: to select a group of assistants, with the understanding that they should be prepared in his school, should have a knowledge of the poor, and should be ardent in their vocation. Up to this time Vincent had plead that such a group would confuse him and that he did not feel he had the capacity to train others.

He now questioned whether this humility did not screen great pride. Perhaps he preferred to carve out his career alone so that when it was completed the beautiful result would be seen as his alone. From the moment such a possibility occurred to him, he was vanquished. He went at once to Madame de Gondi and told her that he acquiesced in her plans. He now believed that the moment had come when the definite character of his Missions must be fixed and their perpetuation planned for.

Madame de Gondi had been so struck with the wonderful success of Vincent's first mission that, beginning with 1617, she had decided to put aside a fund of fifteen thousand livres, the equivalent today of about fifty thousand francs, to be used by some religious order to supply mission priests to preach on all her estates every five years. She wished Vincent, of course, to carry out her plan and to make the wisest expenditure of the money. But an unexpected difficulty arose: Vincent put his request for mission priests before the Jesuits, before the Oratorians and before other orders, but met with no response. Some plead their small numbers, others previous engagements; none were free. He faced the paradoxical truth that it was easier to collect money for charity than to distribute it.

Madame de Gondi, however, was not disturbed over this first repulse. Quite certain that she would find later the opportunity to expend the money as she desired, she now put it back in her coffers. It remained there for seven years but during these years the lady herself was not idle. She believed that her plan had failed through lack of organization and so set to work to perfect it. She called on her husband for aid and won his support; he promised to add thirty thousand livres to her fund. This gave her quite enough capital for a start, and she was now not sorry that the existing religious orders had refused to cooperate with them.

As Vincent thought it over, he reflected upon the fact that every year a number of devoted doctors and priests joined him for his work in the country districts. What would be easier than to form such helpers into a permanent organization? The chief need was a house where the group would be united and would live in common. The idea caught the imagination of the Count de Gondi who laid it before his brother, the Bishop of Paris. This prelate not merely thought well of it, but promised active assistance. As to a house, there happened at that time to be one vacant, a former college that had been founded in the thirteenth century under the name of Bons-Enfants. This would be the cradle of the new Congregation, with the indispensable Vincent as head of the new community.

Despite his joy at such immediate success, Vincent prayed over the plan for he distrusted everything that came to him in the way of an honor or a dignity. He never yielded except to duty and it was only

sacrifices that he was in haste to accept. It was not until he had assured himself that both duty and sacrifice were bound up in the new work that he accepted the name of founder and became Principal of the College. But even now his scruples disturbed him so much that he postponed his definite answer until he could make a retreat and there prepare himself. In this retreat he foresaw that he was to expend his strength and goodness so utterly that he resolved once for all "to undertake nothing in the future, so long as he was carried away by the fever of his hopes and by the great good that he hoped to achieve."

Officially it was the the sixth of March 1624 that he received the title of Principal of the College of the Bons-Enfants, and six days later Antoine Portail, one of his first companions, took possession of it in his name. The title of Founder of the Mission (for the new community was to be known as a mission) was not given him until the year following, on the seventeenth of April, 1625. This delay may well have been caused by Vincent, who always drew back from any formality or ceremony of which he must be a part. He had asked that the installation should be of the simplest character and, following his wishes, it took place in the Hotel de Gondi, on the Rue Pavee, in the parish of Saint-Sauveur. In the articles of incorporation the names of Monsieur and Madame de Gondi were prominent. Vincent de Paul is hardly mentioned, either at his own direct request, or because his self-effacement was by this time so well-known that it was acquiesced in as a matter of course.

If Vincent's name is missed from the document, his spirit, on the contrary, can be detected in every line of that admirable charter. It bears the impress of his style as well as the stamp of his creative mind. No one but he could have drawn up such a clear and intelligent document. Here, as elsewhere, he had thought of everything, foreseen everything. Every word is haunted by the passion for sacrifice and charity that filled his soul. When Monsieur and Madame de Gondi say we, it is Vincent who is to be seen with them directing their efforts and, despite their nobility of character, surpassing them at every turn. It was they who placed the words on the charter but it was he who dictated them. They were the scribes of a man of genius, they furnished the material means to back

another man's conception.

Just what did this document, produced through such an extraordinary collaboration, say? We quote:

"Struck by the fact that the dwellers in the cities were well instructed, while the inhabitants of the country districts remained solitary and as though abandoned, we have wished to send to their assistance a few good priests of recognized zeal and piety, who shall devote themselves wholly and entirely to the salvation of the poor, going from village to village, supported from a common purse, and instructing, exhorting, and catechizing these people, urging them to a general confession, accepting no recompense but freely distributing the gifts they have themselves liberally received from the hand of God."

These priests should confine their efforts to the country districts: they were forbidden to preach or administer any sacrament in the large towns, except in case of extreme necessity; they were to give spiritual consolation to unfortunate criminals, that these might draw some profit from their bodily suffering.

As we study this simple and exact document we can not but be touched by the complete unselfishness of those who drew it up: they give everything, they demand nothing; or if they can be interpreted as asking much, it is not for themselves, but for the poor, to whom they are always in debt.

It was just two months after this ceremony that Madame de Condi's health, always delicate and in recent years increasingly so, gave way and she fell seriously ill. Perhaps for years her works of charity had kept her alive, for as her body weakened she had lived upon her spiritual forces. Her own remark seemed true: that her heart continued to beat as long as it was filled with the desire to perform a work of charity.

She was still young and she might reasonably have expected many beautiful years in which to complete her work of charity. But after the establishment of the Foundation it was as though she had dispensed, with one prodigal gesture and in concentrated form, all

the charity that she might have distributed throughout a life-time. She came to a sudden end of her life and of her projects, ready to drop it all, that is, and rise to heaven, for which she was prepared. The charter of the Congregation was indeed her last will and testament. Her mission was fulfilled. At her passing she had, as she had always hoped, the spiritual guidance of Vincent.

Thus died on the twenty-third of June, 1625, in her forty-second year, Frangoise-Marguerite de Silly, Countess of Joigny, Marchioness of the Isles d'Or and other domains, a great lady whose likeness we today may know only through an engraving by Duflos. She stands in flowing court dress, a model of the elegance of her day; her robe is embroidered with pearls, an aigrette adorns her hair, a high lace collar frames her head; in her hand she carries a fan; her youthful face sparkles with vivacity and intelligence.

After Vincent had performed the last rites over his dead friend, he had another task to face: that of informing Monsieur de Gondi, who was in the south of France, of his wife's death. In those days it was not usual that a member of a household who was far away could reach the bed-side of his dying relative before the end came. The death agony can not be prolonged at will. Large expenditure, swift carriages, and furiously driven horses will not win against that other horseman, Death, whose speed is the greater. It was often impossible to send warning by messenger of grave illness; the stricken one must render up the ghost without the sight of the face, or the support of the arms, that would have been so welcome.

Vincent decided that he could better break the blow for Monsieur de Gondi if he went to Provence himself with the news. He was so gifted with insight into the human heart that he knew not only how to soften a blow, but how to assuage the grief that resulted from it. He possessed the gift of consolation. The most poignant sorrow yielded to the gentleness of his suggestion; his sublime faith promised that those who had been worthy of love should be reunited in it.

Monsieur de Gondi leaned heavily on Vincent and yet remained inconsolable. In losing his wife he had lost everything. His life was now without meaning or aim; the only refuge he saw was in God; to Him he wished to retire for the rest of his days. Vincent understood

and approved; he himself intended to leave the Gondi roof, where nothing now held him. The dead woman had in her will requested him to remain near her husband and children, and the Count desired it, but Vincent requested, and obtained, leave to go.

Shortly after this Monsieur de Gondi renounced the world, gave up titles, fortune, offices; gave up the flag-ship with its fluttering royal pennants, keeping only his great name which also he would have given up, had he been able. He retired to the Oratory which Monsieur de Berulle had founded in 1621, the Oratory where, as the solemn and yet inspiring name would indicate, there was nothing to do but pray: or emus. It was by this means that he hoped, through death and the resurrection, to join himself to the wife who called to him.

The retirement of this nobleman caused a great sensation at court and in Paris; it was attributed to the spiritual exhortations of Vincent de Paul, but we have seen that he had but an indirect part in it. And yet who knows but what the long association with the saint, the example and irresistible influence of such a spirit, may not in some mysterious and providential way have prepared this future Oratorian for his vocation.

Monsieur de Gondi lived the life of a religious for more than thirty-five years, leaving behind him the reputation of having been as distinguished in retirement for his devout humility, his loftiness of soul, and his mortifications, as he had been noted in his day for courage and for the splendor of his loyalty in the service of his King.

En Route

Vincent was now freer than ever to devote himself to the great work for which, with the assistance of Monsieur and Madame de Gondi, he had laid the foundations. He had broken his own family ties; his two protectors in the great world had disappeared and he had no further service to perform in their house. He was free, but the prospect before him was not brilliant. The College of the Bons-Enfants sheltered only a few disciples. They formed the nucleus of a tiny, new-born family of which he was the humble and first Director. He did not suspect the number and merit of those who would succeed him.

Of the few followers he had, only one, Monsieur Antoine Portail, declared himself ready to begin actively the evangelization of the peasants in the provinces. Monsieur Portail was a priest from Aries, who for more than fifteen years had followed Vincent as a devoted disciple. Two men, then, were ready for this work, two men to cover the whole of France! There was nothing in the thought to dismay or even discourage Vincent, but there was indeed food for reflection. He was always contented with little, as was proper for a Christian, who is so much wiser than the philosopher.

"If only there were three of us!" he thought. And then the third came, consenting to join them, at least for a time. So the three set out. The path was long, the end of it could not be seen. But they did not try to look far ahead. Their daily march began with the rising sun; at night when they slept, often in the open, their bodies were exhausted but their souls were at rest. They had few possessions. Everything was contained in the little packet they carried under the arm, and this served at night as their hard pillow. They had very little money and were so saving of it that they ate only enough to keep away hunger and drew in all the tighter their corded belts. They were too poor to afford a porter to look after their house in Paris when they left, and the key of the College des Bons-Enfants was left with a neighbor. Strictly speaking there was nothing in the college to attract thieves.

In gratitude for old favors, Vincent went first to certain domains of

the Gondi family.

"We went," he said, some years later, "quite simply and sincerely to evangelize the poor as our Lord had done. That was our method. And God did on His side that which He had ordained from the beginning."

"Simply and sincerely I" they were words that he often employed, words that seemed to express both his life and the work he was to do in the world. They might have served him as his device. They expressed the faith and the patience upon which his strength and success were built.

In Vincent's eyes time did not matter. He never wasted it but he went about his work as though he had centuries ahead of him. He saw in time, in the apparent deceptiveness of its duration and in the reasoned slowness with which one could use it, a quicker and surer means of reaching an end than if one were in haste to seize upon it. Instead of looking upon time in its flight as an enemy, he made of it a friend, an auxiliary; once his affairs were intrusted to the passing hours, he was content to leave them there. Time was the best workman. Vincent matured everything that was brought to him. It was necessary then to let things, all things, take their proper course. Time must be given even for words to take effect, for seeds to grow, for prayer to rise, and for the candle to burn; everything in due order. Time is God and never hastens. Such was the pious philosophy thought out and practiced by Vincent with a peasant's thoroughness. It was because he never worked directly for results, that results came to him. These results would have seemed meager to a more feverish worker; he found them quite enough and even too much to have come from the little he did. Step by step thus it is, he thought, that one advances surely, without need to retreat. From three, his group of workers increased to eight, then to eleven. After ten years there were but thirty-five. "What!" you cry, "not more? That is nothing!"

But these thirty-five had a multiplicative power that was extraordinary. They renewed each day the eternal miracle of the loaves and fishes. Their nets were not large but they were well-placed and there was always a full catch.

Because of their small number Vincent could group, mold, and instruct them in a marvelous fashion. They were the kind of priests he longed for, the kind he loved; they were what he had dreamed a priest should be: humble, modest, obedient, gentle, absolutely unselfish. They wished only to follow him and to do his will. They possessed rustic wit and good sense, but rustic gravity also, a quality which penetrates and carries conviction to other rustics. Vincent himself was the child of these simple virtues and he kept for the people of the country districts an especial tenderness, a preference, in fact. He had given an equal devotion and care to the poor in the cities but those in the country moved him more strongly, for he felt and wished to feel that he was of their family.

How did these good disciples of the saint set about their mission? According to precept, "simply and sincerely." They went on foot, in groups of three, from one village to another, in each place staying to talk, to hear confessions, to preach. In this fatiguing program they found what relaxation they had. They went always on foot, vagabonds of God, without even a tent for shelter. Sometimes the news of their arrival ran ahead of them; then they were stared at when they entered. But usually they came as a surprise to the various hamlets. When they arrived unannounced, like tramps, dust-covered, the rustics thought from their appearace that they came to beg alms rather than to distribute them, and were first surprised and then at once drawn to them by the appeal of their forlorn appearance.

These men who carried with them from so far the bread and wine that none could see, moved these simple people to offer them hospitality, rest, and refreshment. Doors opened to them, with an invitation to come in. But the priests remained in the open, where there is more room; the finest preaching is done out of doors under the sky, in the open air. The wind helps the words, carries them over walls, over roofs, drops them in prepared ground where they will mature. And so out of doors they preached. At once, simply, and with all the frankness of a mountebank's speech, they put on their "exhibition," following to a certain extent the practice of those poor strolling players who even then toured the country. They did not, to be sure, use the same tone nor the same tune, but they introduced themselves with the same words:

"Who are we? And why do we come? Listen, and you will see!"

And this they did in accordance with a formula adopted by Vincent, which he called "the little method"

The Little Method

What was his method? Simply to use a familiar language, which the humblest of his hearers could understand; a language drawn from the usages of daily life, with its figures borrowed from their surroundings, or from the work to which they were accustomed. If it is asked how this applied to Vincent's "orators" (although nothing could really be further removed from oratory than Vincent's system), the three points clearly defined by him may be given:

"First, show the reasons for loving goodness and hating evil; second, show what virtue is; third, show how it is attained."

Vincent had taught his priests how to develop these three points; nothing was left to chance or to fancy. He drew his priests in a circle about him and talked in the most intimate manner; he built up for them and explained in detail the best method of preaching: They should first think out, prepare, and compose their discourse, with all its divisions and sub-divisions, and then speak it over. This was simple in theory but difficult in practice.

Once having established this strong, masterly, and flexible framework, he wished it so skillfully covered that in its final form nothing could be seen of this. All must be done "simply and sincerely!' They must not speak too loud. It is better that people should strain their ears than wish to close them. The good "peddler" of the Gospel wares had no need to raise or lower his voice. His listeners would grow quiet as soon as he spoke, if the words were clear; and if his words were heard, they would be grasped and remembered. There should be no shouting and waving of arms, the fewest possible gestures. Talk to them familiarly, look smilingly into their faces, with a constant flow of affection from the heart; let the hands, too, be eloquent, between phrases, of the kindness that animates them.

Had we room, we would quote here in full Vincent's admirable discourse of the year 1655, in which he repeated his reasons for preaching according to his "little method." It was, he recalls, the method of Jesus and his disciples.

With malicious gayety and trenchant good humor he rallied the preachers of the day on their sermons and their fashionable affectations. "Why all that fanfare? Must one prove that he is a good rhetorician, a good theologian? If so, he is taking the wrong way. If one wishes to obtain the esteem of the intelligent and to acquire a reputation for eloquence, he must persuade his listeners and turn them from what they should avoid. But that does not consist in polishing one's language, balancing periods, or pronouncing discourses in a loud voice with the tone of a declaimer who moves on a superior plane. Do such preachers achieve their aim? Do they lead their hearers toward love and piety? Do these hearers repent and hasten to confession? Not at all. Not at all."

"No," he continues, "it is my method that teaches how to preach well," and he then goes on to tell them, first, the reasons which should make them like this method, second, of what it consists, and third, the means by which it may be acquired.

The first reason is the "efficacy" (a point which he will develop and prove presently) of his method; it alone is capable of leading to virtue. "Is it enough," he continues, "to tell me why I should be virtuous, if I do not know what virtue is, nor of what is consists, nor what its duties and functions are? Then consider the second point, which attends to all that. You draw aside the curtain and reveal the full beauty and splendor of virtue; you show this in a simple, familiar way, and in particular explain what virtue is, what acts must be practiced in achieving it, coming down always to particulars." He continued this argument, putting questions and at once answering them, anticipating the questions of his hearers, who might be mute out of respect:

"Ah, yes, I see very well now what it is and of what virtue consists, the actions which develop it; that is all excellent but, sir, it is difficult. How is it to be attained? I do not know what I should do in respect to that, nor how I should begin. Granted that I recognize the need of virtue and wish to obtain it, how can I, when I have no knowledge of the means? It is impossible." But give that man the means ah, yes, then he is satisfied. Vincent at once states them and then remarks:

"What remains to be said after that? Nothing. What does one do

when he wishes to make a person like something or do something? He tells all the advantages of it, all the disadvantages of the opposite course; he shows the thing itself and its beauty, and at last, if the means of acquiring it are put in the man's hands, there is nothing more to be done. This is just what our method is. I assure you in simple truth that, old as I am, I do not know, nor have I heard, that anything else is needed to persuade men."

He then takes up all his arguments in turn, opens and reopens them, as one might first breathe the fragrance of a flower and then proceed to dissect it, studying each petal, each leaf in detail. He does all this without losing sight for an instant of the "little method" and the great profit to be derived from it, if it is followed.

"I should never finish if I told you a fraction of what it has pleased God to do through this method. There are so many examples that I could not recount them before evening. Here is something never heard of, until it happened to us. I, who am white-haired, have never heard of anything like it happening to another preacher. Some of you, my friends, know about the bandits, those robbers from Italy, who take possession of the countryside, robbing and pillaging at will. There are many murders in that country because of the bitter vengeance they take on each other, destroying one another and giving no quarter. These people when worsted by their enemies turn the tables by terrorizing the highways, along with other wicked men, and stripping the unfortunate passers-by. They are called bandits and they are so numerous that Italy is filled with them; the villages are few and far between that do not suffer from them. But our mission having been held in some of these villages the bandits who were there gave up their wicked way of life and were converted by the grace of God, who in this was pleased to use the 'little method.' This was a thing, until then, unheard of, quite unheard of! Never had any one known bandits, for any reason, to give up their practices."

He appealed to Monsieur Martin, one of his leading disciples. "Is it true, Monsieur Martin, that Italian bandits were converted at our missions? You were there; was it true? Since we are here in friendly intercourse, tell us, please, just how it was."

"Yes, Monsieur," said Monsieur Martin, "it was even so. In the

village where we held missions the bandits as well as the others came to confession."

"A marvel," exclaimed Vincent, "bandits converted and by the 'little method'!" In his excitement he added:

"Here is another village. At one time two of our seminarists conducted a mission in a village on the seacoast. A ship had been wrecked upon that coast. The cargo and wreckage from the boat were tossed on the strand. The people from the village and roundabout rushed to the scene for pillage and seized all they could carry off. We were conducting a mission there according to the 'little method,' and what had been taken from the unfortunate merchants was given back. After hearing the exhorting and the preaching, the people made up their minds to restore everything; some, the bales; some, the cloth; others, the money. And there, gentlemen, was the effect of the 'little method.' Find me any similar result from the show and pomp of great eloquence. Scarcely one person is converted even at Advent or Lent by such preaching. We observe this in Paris."

"The 'little method' is successful also at court. Twice already it has appeared there and, if I may venture to say so, it has been well received, has triumphed. Marvelous fruit has come from it despite all opposition. Do you say then it is only for common people or for rustics? In Paris, at court, everywhere, there is no better or more successful method. Draw your conclusions. Let us all adopt it."

What a charming passage! How it rings! What warmth and beauty! The words, ideas, sentiments, the warnings, instructions, all of it apparently poured out pell-mell, and yet so effective, sweet, and limpid; all in proper order. It is idiomatic speech, racy of the soil, but it approaches eloquence and loftiness by sheer force of sincerity, of good-will, of sensitiveness, and of calm tenacity. He fears repetition so little that he seems to use it to drive his points home. He presents his beloved "little method" under every guise; he turns it over and over to show its many forms, to present evidence that no matter how carefully it is scrutinized it is perfect, flawless.

When one thinks he has finished, he begins over again, so deeply has it entered his consciousness, so wholly is it identified with the

very movements of his soul. This method is the little drop of thought, so to speak, which he lets fall intentionally, increasingly, from the beginning to the end of his discourse, because he knows that, making his attack always at the same place, upon the spirit that he hopes to reach, he will finally pierce and enter it, even as the drop of water wears away the hard rock.

It is not enough to praise and vaunt his "little method" in the light of his own experience; he is equally proud of the success it has had with others who have not feared to employ it:

"That method of ours, which you know, is used, and used often, by the greatest personages; it is the method of those preachers who accomplish marvels. Monseigneur, the Bishop of X, told me that if he preached a hundred thousand sermons he would use no other. And Monseigneur de Sales, that great servant of God, told me much the same thing, and so have many others. In the mission held at Saint-Germain the people flocked from every side, from all the quarters of the great city. Every parish was represented, and there were persons from every walk of life, even doctors of philosophy. We preached to this great throng using only the 'little method.' Monseigneur the Bishop of Boulogne, who also preached, used no other method. What fruit it bore! O God, what fruit! General confessions were made just as in the villages. Oh, yes, God be praised! Never did finely polished sermons make so many converts as this method of ours. Every conversion made there causes people to say, 'Yes, this man knows all about it, he says wonderful things.' This is so true that if today a man wishes to pass for a good preacher in the churches of Paris and at court, he must preach in our way, without affectation; and then they say of him, 'He accomplishes marvels, he preaches like the Missioners.'"

It will seem perhaps that we have dwelt too long on this famous "little method" and the talks in which it was always one of the subjects, but the temptation was great to show Vincent as he exhorted and convinced others in the intimacy of discussion. Thanks to the faithful preservation of his words, one hears him, one learns in the sound of his voice the meaning of his thought. One catches the cadence, the contagious sweetness, the unwearied perseverance, all the charm which is peculiarly his. He speaks

familiarly, chats, says the same thing over and over, but the talk, the vivacity, the constant return to the plan that grips him, possess a force and a power of conviction that are extraordinary. These little intimate talks appear loosely strung together but they are really closely knit, well organized, one argument leading into the next so logically and skillfully, that one is soon completely caught by them. All the innocent graces that enliven his speech, candor, goodness, faith, add a flash of enchantment to his copious instructions.

These pages that by this time should be musty with age, have kept their movement and warmth. In reading them one smiles with pure pleasure. What delight it must have been to hear these words spoken, while standing in person before this man "already gray," from whose extraordinary face none could take his eyes.

Regard this face of Vincent de Paul, with its heavy features, beneath the dome of his great brow, browned by exposure, plowed with the furrows of hardship, set of! by the coarse limp collar of linen that seems to have been part of his undergarment. His face might have been one of those .brilliant sketches by Lagneau done in black crayon: an old man with a powerful but sunken head, short, clipped beard, with brilliant eyes that sparkle from their deep sockets. But Lagneau's portraits are cruel to the point of satire and his pencil could not render the tenderness and innocence of Vincent's soul, expressed in the lines of his aging mouth and his venerable chin. And as we listen to his words, he lives again for us, as he stands there unfolding his arguments.

We see him before us, dressed in black, wearing his short, stiff surplice like a choir-boy's. Without interrupting for a moment what he is saying, he comes and goes, stepping up to one and another, observing each one, addressing himself to each, touching an arm here, and there a shoulder, holding another by the button of his cassock while he stresses a word. He is taking much time and he knows it. Suddenly he observes the clock, he exclaims, excuses himself in the most appealing manner. "There is the three-quarters stroke, my friends; bear with me, I beg of you; have patience with me, I humbly beg." After a moment, again confused, he beats his breast, implores pardon, repeating in his concern, lest he bore or

weary them, "bear with me."

But no one wearies of listening to him. His hearers would have listened as long as he could talk; they were so moved and exalted. They had no sense of listening to a sermon, for all that he was supposed to be preaching, but rather to the reflections of a friend who was thinking out loud not too loud, however and expressing their own thoughts better than they could themselves. How refreshing to drink in his simple, homely words, to slake one's thirst at so pure a source, and to know this delight through months and years!

After the Bons-Enfants, the Lepers' House

By 1630, the College des Bons-Enfants proved too small for the increasing number of Vincent's missionaries, and in addition the building needed repairs which the Gondi endowment was not large enough to care for. Vincent, however, was not disturbed; he awaited the assistance of God. Again he was rewarded.

The old leper-house of Saint-Lazare had been occupied since the sixteenth century by secular priests who had at their head a prior selected by the Bishop of Paris. It was an important benefice with considerable revenues. Lying on the road to St-Denis, it had extensive buildings in which there were now no lepers; it was occupied only by a small group of canons. In 1632 the prior, after certain difficulties he had had with the canons, planned to retire and proposed to turn over his benefice to Vincent. It was a generous offer but Vincent refused it. The idea that "his little company," and especially that he, "the least of men," should come into such fortune and position surprised him and disquieted him. He quite naively said as much.

"What, monsieur, you hesitate!" exclaimed the prior, Adrien Le Bon, amazed at his opposition.

"It is quite true," replied the saint, "that your proposal startles me; it seems so far above what I have a right to expect, that I do not dare seriously to consider it. We are a company of poor priests who live humbly and have no other plans than to serve the poor of the country districts. We are greatly obliged to you and we thank you most humbly, but you must allow us to refuse your offer."

Vincent meant this. It took a year for the prior to overcome his scruples. Vincent was always slow in coming to a decision; his prudence was excessive, but once his mind was made up he went straight ahead. On the seventh of January, 1632, he took possession of the priory of Saint-Lazare with his missionaries who found themselves from that day called Lazarists.

The huge empty establishment must have seemed dreary and

discouraging to Vincent and his companions, when they made their quiet entrance into this new home. It was uninhabited except for certain poor unfortunates afflicted with insanity who were confined in the huts at the end of the garden. Would there ever be priests enough to fill such a place? They could not foresee that one day the great group of buildings would be too small for all the activities of which it would be the center and focus.

When one reflects today upon the marvelous history it has had, one wonders if this huge and ancient barracks of Saint-Lazare was not built and expressly planned from the very first to become, when its hour struck, the cradle, the official residence, the mother-house, of the group of orders to which Vincent's name and fame were attached. Henceforth it is his residence, his palace, a palace without gilding or frescoed ceilings, with bare walls, tiled corridors, and court yards opening only on cloisters, study-halls, refectories, dormitories, chapels, laundries, and cold cells. But, even so, it was a palace, a royal dwelling, in its way, which Vincent quickly and with great intelligence made for the next twenty-eight years, and for a long time afterward, the Louvre of Charity, the Vatican of his modest genius.

The Daughters of Charity

Vincent de Paul had always been especially devoted to the Blessed Virgin. He first put his trust in God and established his relations with his fellowmen by seeing in each of them a reflection of God himself, but we recall the naive idealism by which he stabilized and simplified one side of his human contacts by seeing in Madame de Gondi the reflection of the Blessed Virgin herself. This devotion to the Mother of our Lord, the desire to see her spirit working in the worthiest of her children, or rather his desire to make these rare spirits rise to her in aspiration, resulted in the feminizing I use the word in its highest and strictest sense of his virile charity and added to it that exquisite sweetness, that understanding of the maternal, that marked his spirit.

His fundamental and deep-rooted desire to aid and evangelize men through the help of other men had not made him neglect women. He knew their needs and how to fulfill them; he knew, too, the powerful and unique assistance that they alone could give. Once certain that his brotherhoods were firmly established and would perpetuate themselves, he felt that the time had come for developing the special mission of women; he believed that through women he could push to success the great crusade he had begun through the instrumentality of men. By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and by his devotion to the Blessed Virgin, he created that masterpiece of love, the Sister of Charity or, to employ the first and proper name, the Daughter of Charity. Indeed she is both sister and daughter, mother and friend; all the possible bonds unite her to the poor, the abandoned. In herself she represents the whole family that the outcast has lost. No matter what her age, she can understand every age. While she lives, there are no orphans. She is a good fairy whom God sent one morning from heaven to remain on earth forever, even to the final destruction of the world. The Daughters of Vincent were the last disciples to gather about him and about Mademoiselle Le Gras; for this work of love was born in the heart and mind of a woman.

Mademoiselle Le Gras, born Louise de Marillac, was the niece of Chancellor Michel de Marillac and of Marshal Louis de Marillac,

both of them victims of the vengeance of Richelieu after the "Day of the Dupes," the eleventh of November, 1630. Louise married Antoine Le Gras, private secretary of Marie de Medici. In rank he was only a squire, and as the title of Madame could not be assumed by any one whose husband was not at least a knight or a baron, Louise was called only Mademoiselle Le Gras. This lack of title, however, has not prevented her from leaving a name more illustrious and more honored than that of many queens.

What was, then, this Daughter of Charity, this immortal figure, which she with Vincent's aid had modeled and created for the world? She was by preference, an honest country girl who had all the virtues and good traits of a servant, and of a servant of God; quick, good-natured, strong enough to perform the hardest labor. She must be up at four and must retire late, sleeping little and, often, in her clothes; she must consent to be moved about constantly, and yet remain even-tempered, healthy, and sound; she must live in chastity and in obedience.

At first she was not, strictly speaking, a member of a religious order. She took no vows nor did she live in a cloister; her habit was not that under which we now recognize her. An honest country girl, as we have said, coarsely dressed like a peasant, she wore no veil, but only a kerchief; God wished the poor to see her face. Her cloister was the street, all the streets, where a hundred times a day, and at night as well, she made her way back and forth, went up and down steep stairs, entered the infected wards of hospitals, followed her sufferers to their garrets, from which she moved them if she could, or if not turned back her cuffs and began her work then and there.

She did not fast and did not spend her time in contemplation; she was active and always on the go. Others might be called to a life of silence and contemplation, of kneeling and adoring, but this was not her vocation. Vincent did not ask it of her. He expected her to be active, to talk, to laugh, to sing songs, rather than cantides, and to be found everywhere that life was busiest. So absorbing must her work be to body and soul, that he took from her the time for piety, as though it were a penance.

"Yes, let your office and your litany be the poor; they will suffice. In

their service put all else aside. In doing this you leave God only to find Him. The poor alone demand your time. Treat them well, with gentleness, with tenderness, with love; for they are your lords and masters, and mine. They are to be the nobility of heaven. It is they who will open the gates of heaven."

The theme is dear to Vincent and he reiterates it endlessly: the poor are our masters, even when they think themselves the lowliest of our servants; we owe them care, attention, assistance, respect. Vincent labors to instil in "his sisters" the love of devoted service so that they shall really consider themselves servants of the poor. For three hundred years the type has not changed; this Daughter of Charity remains just what she was. They called her then, to be sure, the "gray sister," but happily she took the name of the founder of her order, and her robe is of another color. The kerchief bound about her head has become a cornet, but she is herself the same.

The Cornet

What was the origin of this familiar head-dress of the order? Who invented the cornet? Contrary to what might be expected, the credit should be given to Vincent's disciple and successor, Monsieur Joly. The old belief that Vincent was the originator has a certain basis of credibility. It is not difficult to believe that our good Vincent, who considered every minute detail, thought over this question of dress. He might have discussed it with his disciple, when old age made the completion of the plan impossible, and in his incorrigible modesty have wished to leave the honor of settling this detail to his successor. But we must deny the possibility. And why? Simply because Monsieur Joly, who would have been scrupulous in all that touched the fame of his master, does not bear this out.

The truth, as I see it, is simple. Both the master and the disciple were responsible for the creation of the cornet; to both should be given the credit. And this is the explanation I am sure of it: Vincent must, if not during his life, then after his death, have suggested the coiffure he wished for his daughters, in the course of a dream, so that Monsieur Joly saw the pattern, the method of cutting it, and the way of putting it together; and then, awaking and being still conscious of the dream, sprang out of bed, rushed to his table, and there wrote down the exact details before his vision vanished. He comprehended that it was not simply a dream but an order which he was to carry out. And so this masterpiece, this crowning of the daughters of Vincent, must have come through a dream.

Putting aside for the moment our familiarity with it, the more closely we examine this strange head-dress, the more astonishing it seems. We remember that it is intended primarily for healthy country girls, accustomed to the open air, the outdoor life, the jostling of rustic crowds. And these same girls of the country must be ready to make their way into cramped, stifling rooms, low-ceilinged and filthy. They will stumble over uneven floors and lean over wretched pallets, will wash, iron, sweep, clean, cook, perform a thousand humble services; for this they need the freedom of the body, the brow, the eyes, the ears, the whole head. Since this is so, would not the simplest round bonnet, a "three-piece" cap like that of

a baby, be the most suitable, even the inevitable, head-dress? At least something soft, that would take up no room, and easy to put on and take off.

But instead of a sensible choice like this what has Monsieur Vincent, our great saint, selected? And you, so blind and somewhat pathetic, Monsieur Joly, how could you accept such a thing without comment or protest? Had it been any one but you, reverend Fathers, we should say it was done on a wager.

Behold your devoted daughters and see to what you have dared to condemn them for all time! To wear, much worse than a hat, a sort of helmet, a huge piece of architecture, a cathedral in heavy linen, which contravenes all the demands of common sense! Instead of leaving the head free, you have encased it from neck to eye-brow; you have obstructed the line of vision. She who must move quickly through crowds and encounter dirt at every turn could so well use a soft and dark covering for her head, whereas you have given her a huge head-dress so stiff and pointed that it seems made for knocking and breaking as it goes. Why, after imprisoning in this cruel fashion the face of your servant, have you also given her the sweeping wings that weight her head and prevent her from hastening on her deeds of charity as quickly as she would like? And you who were so wise, so thrifty, why did you choose this fine fabric, quick to soil and to crumple, this linen which, to be fresh, requires the constant and costly aid of washing and ironing? We should like an immediate explanation of this, if you please.

The two gentlemen smile and reply:

"Be reassured. We admit that at first sight we seem to have acted contrary to what our own custom and common sense would dictate, in selecting the fabric, form, and color of the head-dress that so startles you. We did not, however, choose lightly nor unadvisedly. You miss the point of what we are striving for. If we decided first to cut and then to cover the hair of our daughters, to cover over their ears and to bind their brows, it was to impress upon them directly and forcibly the fact that although not cloistered but really thrown actively into the midst of the world, they must think of themselves as in another sense retired from it. There will be no further concern with curls or fashions in the dressing of their hair, which will no

longer flutter loose about neck or brow.

"And then the ears, henceforth taking in all sounds and words through the filter of the linen folds, will be able at once to shut out that which should not enter. This daughter of ours can look at the world only from between the two white walls placed against her cheeks, so that wherever she is she will always recall the fresh and calm corridors of our religious houses. But if we have restricted her sight along the sides of her path, we have prolonged and directed it into the distance. This is the meaning of the point of the head-dress, sharply turned and pinned like an arrow straight ahead of her line of vision; this good daughter of ours can not lift her eyes without directing them toward heaven; everything leads her to turn in that direction. How safe she is, her face protected, sheltered under this gracious shadow! It gives her a sense of privacy, of reserve. She can see without being clearly seen herself and can withdraw her thoughts even in the midst of turmoil and concentrate them. In short, she bears her own cloister with her.

"If you say 'it is not practical,' she will prove to you herself that nothing is at the same time more agreeable and more useful than this cornet. It is proof against snow, rain, sun, and wind.

"'It is difficult to manage, complicated.'

"What, complicated! Fold it, bend it back, put in a pin or two it takes no longer than to make the sign of the cross! Do not think for a moment that its spreading wings hinder her passage; on the contrary, they may be thought of as wings that make easier her journeys. Grant that labor and skill are needed for the laundering, but in just that they show their pride; it is as near to coquetry as they ever come a spiritual coquetry. To honor the Blessed Virgin we have put our daughters in a habit of blue and white, a strong blue in a coarse material; but for the cornet a pure white is used, that of the finest coifs. This white must be the most perfect, the most uniform, the most polished, and it must remain thus, without blemish, from morning until night in spite of everything; its shining radiance is the virginal symbol of the spotless soul." Do we not hear Vincent saying:

"Do you still ask me whence this came? Ah! it is a hard question. Do

I know? It is a part of my life, of my past, above all it came from God without my having to search for it. Discoveries always come from God. Monsieur Joly and I hardly counted in the matter. Consider us as of little importance in it, we merely made it after a pattern that had been given us.

"What absurd things have been said! For instance, that we tossed a piece of linen in the air and in falling it took this form! Nothing is less true! This came and was received 'simply and sincerely,' as was the case with everything else that has come to me. Ah, yes, if you study meanings closely you may perhaps deduce resemblances that will divert you: this cornet may be conceived of as a galley proceeding under full sail, both prow and stern quite visible. Yes, frankly, the resemblance is striking.

"After all it is not impossible that God in his goodness has allowed us this little reminder of our services as almoner of the galleys and that, in memory of our poor galley-slaves, it was His will that the coif of His daughters should resemble a galley steering its swift course before the wind. But, we repeat, the beauty of the idea is not ours. All the reasons and explanations we have given have come to us merely because we ardently wished to answer our critics and to justify and praise the habit of our daughters."

Thus from beyond the tomb, and from on high, Monsieur Vincent speaks to us, still keeping the humility of his speech and even in eternity not going beyond his "little method." And we who can see the extent of the accomplishment that his humility would never have allowed him to see, are left in a state of reverie and ecstasy like that of worshipers before an altar.

As for the cornet, it has taken flight and gone elsewhere, everywhere. There is no place it has not visited. It has made more than once the tour of the world. Its course is bounded only by the limits of the earth, it has seen all climes, it has become international and yet remained French. It has plunged into the depths of suffering and has achieved the heights of emotion, of pity, of sacrifice, of art, of poetry. Whether in the person of a soft-eyed Sister Rosalie or of some nameless girl known to God alone, it has been engraved, painted, sculptured, honored, sung. It is to be found

in the Annals of the Faith, it is painted on the walls of churches, and immortalized in the pageantry of stained glass.

Botticelli and Fra Angelico are the poorer for not having known it, but at least the good Willette has discovered it and cornets are scattered like butterflies in the Parce Domine of the Butte. There is a heroic quality about the cornet that brings it to the front in great historical moments, in those of terror as well as those of glory. In the advent of war, pestilence, revolution, those storms from which the rest of us think only of escaping crouching or rushing for cover it sets forth, spreading out its wings as though like a bird it would hover over the stretcher of some wounded one to whose service it comes; not merely the dove of the ark, but of the trench, of the barricade. It places a screen of white before the agony of the soldier and the beggar or the crushed aviator breathing his last and offers them a retreat. One sees its flutter in railway stations, in third-class compartments, and at the great seaports upon boats under steam for China or for Africa. When at the behest of the "Mother Superior" it remains in town, it makes gayer the schools, the workshops, the hospitals; it is the flower of the day-nurseries; it plays at hide-and-seek with the orphans.

And constantly the miracle renews itself. In all its movements, in all its encounters the cornet keeps intact its perfection of form, its immaculate whiteness. All impurities fall away from it. No one has ever seen on any one of these coifs the slightest spot except on occasions of wounds and death, when its whiteness is stained with the blood of others, or of her who wears it. It follows with the noise of fluttering leaves the candles and banners of a religious procession, or it flaps with excitement as it follows the games of children; it knows street cries and the movements of crowds; everywhere it is respected, sacred and unique.

Among the thousands of coifs of all kinds to be found on the heads of women in religion, upon earth as well as in heaven, it has easily the first place. Magnificat! One has but to say "a cornet," and every one has understood. It is she! It can be no one else. It is the good Sister, the Sister of Saint Vincent de Paul.

In Extremis: In Excelsis

"Show Me More, Always More!"

The Daughters of Charity, while they were still the "gray sisters," to use the term by which they were at first called, had for their headquarters only the residence of Mademoiselle Le Gras, in the village of La Chapelle. But finding her place too far from Paris, she removed with them into a house across from Saint-Lazare. Thus they had only a few steps to take to be in touch with their director and receive advice from him. Each day he gave them instructions and these talks of his are still renowned, inspired as they were by that gentle and fatherly spirit which constituted their charm and their efficacy.

It was now a good many years since Vincent had founded his famous groups of men and of women, following the establishment of his missions. He was still Almoner General of the galleys; he held consultations, preached sermons, kept up the heavy load of his religious and social duties, and his correspondence was voluminous. Then there were visits, changes to be made, laborious journeys to distant places, all the thorny questions of ways and means, problems of conscience and of business. When to this he added the new organization of his "Daughters," one might think that our bold Monsieur Vincent would have felt, not that he had the right to repose, to be sure for him that would have meant desertion of duty and consequent sin but that the time had come to be content with the great program already undertaken and to look no further. But to think that, would be to misjudge him. Where good works were concerned, he did not know how to set limits. He was born and endowed with the talents of an organizer and he spent himself unceasingly in the service of others. The more he did, the more he wished to do, and the more he found to do. Glimpses into the distant future did not frighten him, they stimulated him. Only a feeling of timidity or a sense of not being sure of himself could have discouraged him.

When Vincent first entered the huge and empty buildings of Saint-Lazare with his pitifully small band of disciples, he was oppressed with a sense of his own impotence, but there soon awoke in him a holy desire to pour life into its emptiness; he could have wished

Saint-Lazare even larger. He warmed and stirred to the task as a new master might to the examination of the extent and quality of the estates he has just inherited. At once this gloomy ensemble of empty rooms and cold corridors, this glacial, useless cenotaph disappeared before Vincent's eyes and he saw, instead, what it would be like when warm and animated, given over to fruitful, ardent labor. The force of his will, he knew, could awaken it, fill it with people, and make it resound with the chorus of God's praises.

So Monsieur Vincent made the headquarters of his labors the old leper-house, from which there was a constant going forth and returning, as to the fountain-head, of all the thoughts and spirits of his disciples, both general and individual; they found there discipline to control their efforts, and a heart that beat warmly to theirs.

Saint-Lazare was a world within itself. It became as densely occupied and as murmurous as a bee-hive; to Vincent it was indeed his world; he had created the bonds, but he, more than any one else, was held by them. Within its walls he felt most completely himself; there his mind was at its clearest; there he felt sound in body and in soul, capable of pushing through any plans. He could no longer travel happily unless he set forth from this place and knew that he could soon return there. It was the country of his choice. It seemed to him that he had been born there, and there he hoped to die. When he came back from his tours in the provinces, worn out, almost speechless after the scores of sermons preached in the open air, in all weathers, to the poor of the country districts, or when he returned exhausted from a round of visits to hospitals, prisons, and the homes of the wretched, he would sink down with relief in his own blessed little cell with its plaster walls and tiny window. There he instantly felt that strength flooded back into him and that the air he breathed was better and more stimulating for him than the country air he had just left but which was no longer his by preference or habit.

He had thirty-two years still before him in his life as a missionary, extending from 1628 to 1660, and it was at Saint-Lazare that he spent these years and carried out his plans. Here was the source of those forces that grew into the torrents and rivers, the veritable

flood of charity which his genius had struck from the rock. We have neither space nor time to give detailed account of all that lay behind the splendor of his achievement. That history is full of difficult and tedious chapters, of money shortages and other problems that must be solved by slow patience. Others, who have the information and the expert knowledge, have written of this side of Vincent's career; indeed a whole shelf of books has been written on this topic, and the end is not yet.

Vincent de Paul is as inexhaustible now as he was during his life-time; he still gives and gives again of himself. No one so continues his largesse as does he, the patron of the poor. No matter how many of his lessons are absorbed, there are always others left. In the generous mantle of his existence, tucked away in its folds, there is always store of gold and silver to be found sufficient to feed, instruct, restore those who hunger and thirst after his perfection and long for his protecting serenity. His contribution to the sublime store of treasure left us by the saints is like some precious relic kept in a provincial cathedral or in some remote chapel, but a relic of such renown that pilgrims come from afar to render it homage. The treasure of Vincent de Paul belongs to France and to the Church, but it is open to the world, freely and always.

Vincent's portrait should not be set in precious stones; but rather should there be attached to it these words written in his own large, firm script brief epitome of his life:

Brotherhoods . . . Hospitals . . . Prisons . . . Galleys . . . Peasants . . . Lepers and the Insane . . . Paris . . . The Provinces . . . Italy . . . Poland . . . Spain . . . Barbary . . . Madagascar . . . Retreats . . . Sermons . . . Letters . . . Charity . . . His Daughters . . . Ladies . . . The Aged . . . Children . . . The Poor of Picardy, of Champagne, of Lorraine . . . Tasks, Counsels, Orders, Duties . . . Men . . . God . . . Amen!

This is the proper setting for Vincent's life. These are the diamonds of his spirit, the pearls of his love, the rubies of his zeal.

Thus did he establish his Daughters of Charity, or rather, as he expressed it, "they came into existence." By 1629 the Association

had taken on shape and importance, little by little, to be sure. Vincent did nothing in a day, and indeed if he had tried to push events they would have resisted him; both they and Vincent took their time.

The beginnings of this organization were so simple that at first these splendid young women were called by their baptismal names, with that of their own parish added to it: "Marguerite of Saint-Paul," "Nicole of Saint-Laurent." No one seemed to suspect, they least of all, that in this usage they followed the custom of the highest nobility; in their complete humility they formed an aristocracy of virtue. Their small company was at first joined to the Ladies of the Associations of Charity, a group of women who had responded sufficiently well to Vincent's appeal, so long as their duties were confined to the distribution of alms, or at most to visiting the poor. But they made excuses when it went beyond alms or visits. They found it not in harmony with their position, or else they had not the time or the strength or the knowledge, and so sent some one else, when it came to touching and healing misery with their own hands. To send some one else was not at all Vincent's idea.

The Daughters of Charity made it possible for Vincent to make good the weakness displayed in the other organization; he based the highest hopes on their devotion. Whenever he could, during the week, and always without exception on Sundays, he sat in the center of a group of them at Saint-Lazare, conversing with them and imparting to them his gentle instructions. These were at first mere sketches of sermons, very short, very clear, put into the fewest words: a little catechism of their duties, of their particular and privileged vocation as servants of the poor. When the organization increased and Vincent saw further use for it, his talks developed into complete lectures, though we regret having to use the professorial word. They were rather of the nature of talks, full of warmth and good sense and radiant with that paternal tenderness that he put into his speech as soon as words came to him. We know that he was the enemy of ecclesiastical oratory but he himself attained, without effort, a very decided evangelical eloquence. He guarded carefully against making his talks monologues, preferring to draw the girls themselves into the discussion. He knew each one, her nature and her ability, and he turned to them with pointed

questions.

"And now, as for you, Brigette of Saint-Jacques, let us see," he would say very gently, with that discreet and touching friendliness which gave confidence and even firmness to the speech of the shyest girl. He was invariably surprised and, more than that, rewarded when they responded frankly and easily and were happy to reply to his questions, to come nearer him, to be more truly "his Daughters."

In truth it is as his Daughters that we see them. He brought them into being, he marked them with his spirit and his mind, and thus they have remained for three hundred years as they were in the heroic days when they talked familiarly with Monsieur Vincent. Their sweet attractiveness has never relaxed nor varied. There is something direct and live about them, a note of frankness, of good sense, of loyalty; one can look directly into their honest faces and be reassured. The Sister of Saint Vincent de Paul is never sad. Have you ever yourself seen one weep? She has the gayety of the people, of a child: artless, limpid, serene, but resolute.

In every possible way she expresses the joy Vincent demanded of her: in her appearance, in the tone of her voice, the tinkle of her keys or the click of her rosary, in the white sails of her cornet, the patter of her shoes, in her ready laugh, her directness, her decision, her instant and admirable reaction to the greatest crosses and to the greatest misfortunes; in brief, it is from Vincent that her historic gayety derives and the zest from which she hastens toward disaster, as to a feast.

For twenty years the Daughters of Charity went happily on their way; there could be no doubt but that they were needed. They had no rule, not even an organization, at least not on paper. Everything went "simply and sincerely," by the grace of God, and under the watchful eye of Monsieur Vincent, who was, however, turning over in his mind a plan for giving permanent form to the company. With his usual prudence he had not wished to think of the form until he had for some time watched his community at work; practical results first, and then a charter of organization. He followed in this the practice of the Church, which never promulgates a law until after

long experience. At present Vincent had sufficient and more than sufficient proof of the quality of his Daughters. There were not enough of them, indeed, to fill the calls from his confraternities.

In 1641 the Daughters of Charity undertook, and became deeply interested in, two new forms of activity: their little schools for young children, and their refuges. Their intelligence and their devotion soon showed marvelous results in both of these ventures. Charity has its logic, its inner life, and its capacity for expansion. Events follow each other and according to some obscure law have their growth and maturity through time and space. It was this that gave Vincent solid support, a tranquil basis for his strong faith, steadying him in his patience, but not failing at times to torment him; for the train of events moves and imposes itself upon you at the very time that you think you are directing it at your own speed and in your own channels. You are always pushed faster than you wish to go.

To advance is a law of human life, but it extends still further. The wise, the good, the prudent, who have stepped aside from the great highways of life and, in order to escape turmoil and folly, have selected the straight and narrow road, will not escape the other danger which awaits them. They have their path of duty. All temptations are not of the devil. The Good also has an evil spirit, that each moment assails those best known to him, his favorites, whose scruples he knows, as well as their pious timidity. In old age a time comes when, ripe with years and good works, having had enough of privation and sacrifice, one may perhaps be inclined to say (we dare not be unjust) that he has reached the end of his accomplishment, that he can undertake no further great or new tasks, since they would no longer be properly accomplished, because his own forces are inadequate. Then at the side of that man appears the angel of devotion who awakens him and chides him:

"No, you have not finished. Are you afraid? Are you a coward? Are you blind? See what is yet to be done! You think you have reflected upon everything, but you have, in fact, forgotten. Listen to that which calls you. Take up again the task which awaits you. Do you think to escape it? Do not plead age or ill-health. One is never too old to be interested in the aged, nor too broken to bend over

children. Lengthen your days with the former and refresh yourself with the latter. Take your smile and your comfort to those in pain, and refresh yourself with the tears that you know how to check."

Vincent, indeed, had no need to be thus admonished. Nevertheless all these cries of hope or of despair reached him and echoed in his heart. All that is possible today, but which was impossible yesterday, arose and called him.

"Yes, it is true," he said with self-reproach, "my conscience and its voices are quite right. Nothing has been completed, not the half, nor the quarter that should be. Everything hangs fire. We have worked for the poor of the towns and of the country; we have created confraternities of men, and of women, of the Daughters and the Ladies of Charity yes, all that is good, excellent, we may say. But after that, what? Shall we remove the ladder so that none may further climb? Shall I leave, or sit in quiet? Our children are provided with schools and with nurseries. Quite true. But before they enter there, they must at least enter life. There are unfortunate infants with no cradle, there are those who are stifled at birth, others who are flung from windows, or swept into the stables for the rats to devour, or, stark naked, left like parcels at a convent door. And, horror of horrors, there are the ruffian fathers who will flatten the head and deform the limbs to make a human monster that it may become later a revolting and shocking means of revenue. One night I saw such a thing with my own eyes. I snatched the child just in time from the pincers of the scoundrel. I carried it, almost dying, to the lying-in-house, on the Rue Saint-Landry, where it was received.

"But what about that house? I am told it is not well conducted. I must find out about it. Come, this is a thing that really matters. Infants! What a chance for a work of mercy there! But I have sworn to myself not to undertake anything new. And here is a new and urgent work presenting itself. Too bad! No, good! We will undertake it!

"And then what about my good friends the galley-slaves, who are so dear to me, to whom I owe so much, who have taught me so much; must I renounce them? What have I done for them save to make them a few visits now and then, and far less frequently than I could

wish? Is my conscience clear as to them and their lacerated bodies, their poor backs covered with blood, and their poor souls even more lashed. No! No!

"I recall that at Marseilles long ago when I saw their distress, which unnerved me, I said to myself that a hospital for them, for them alone, was a crying necessity. And then, all that has flowed away like the waters under the Pont-Neuf, and they still wait for me to undertake it! Ah, me! Where is my head and where my heart? Quick, we must be busy with that hospital. With the time that it takes to build, I may never see the roof. But that does not matter! I can at least see the foundations, and as to the roof, why, if I am no longer here, I can see it from heaven.

"Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu! And for good measure, a thousand other visions besiege me; sudden light flashes upon me. For instance, all the dreadful ailments of peasants which are so numerous and hideous and yet not even known; they must be described and written about plainly, so that they will be recognized. Would it, perhaps, be a good plan to print pamphlets about this, and sell them, to have them hawked at the doors of churches, in public squares, in the markets? Would that not go straight to the hearts of men and take alms from their pockets? It would certainly. One can't get away from the idea. And then then really everything is coming at once and confusing me. What shall I do about it?

"Then too the poor of the country districts are on my mind! They tell me that even with our help, and our expenses are great, they are not properly fed. That means they don't know how to manage. Hence waste, from which no one profits. What is the remedy? Ah, I saw it only today, a moment ago. We must have soups, thick soups and I must ask my Ladies to write me out complete instructions about how to make them with butter, bread, fat, 'and vegetables, and with the price of everything put down; for it must not cost more than a hundred sous for a hundred persons, even this year when wheat is so dear.

"And what more? How much more is neglected! There is the question of seed for the farmers to sow in their fields that have been ravaged by war. There is the disgrace of dead bodies left unburied, left about to poison the air and bring on the pestilence. There is a

corner in my head where I am planning a special group; I've found the name for them already; they will charge themselves with burying the dead and with quickly removing filth. An unpleasant work, I know, and few will offer themselves for it. If no one offers, have I not my missionaries and, at need, my Daughters, who would be glad to lend me a helping hand? Wherever I have sent them into our devastated provinces to Toul, Metz, Verdun, Nancy, Bar-le-Duc, Saint-Mihiel, Pont-a-Mousson wherever I have sent them to give aid, they have outdone themselves. But, no matter how courageous they are, can they be everywhere at once? They will die from over-work. Then there is Picardy, which greatly needs their help, when they are free. Then! Then? And I wish too, I wish Lord! Ah, Lord! Show me nothing more, I am filled with grief. Oh, pardon me! On the contrary, show me more, show me more, always more."

For better than a quarter of a century these thoughts had been ringing in his brain, like a chime of bells. He was both charmed and wearied by them.

"My bells, my bells!" he cried, as these suggestions rang through him, these urgent needs, that startled him like the beat of a tocsin. And all that which he desired and feared equally he was to accomplish. All these enterprises, and how many others that I forget, or have not the time to enumerate, came in their turn! And for them he had to find the solution. And how? By what secret and mysterious means? Do not ask him. He would merely tell you that he had acted "simply and sincerely" There was no magic in it. But if, instead of believing him, one examines not only the extent and the importance of the work he did, but the conditions under which he was forced to push it to a successful issue, one is left amazed, admitting that it may not be magic, but that it most certainly is a miracle. We must now try to represent these things in their reality.

Saint-Lazare

Consider first the setting of Saint-Lazare. It had in Vincent's time nothing of the frightful notoriety that it gained later, and from which it has never recovered. It inspired then neither horror nor disgust. It was the Reign of Terror that baptized it with blood, and it was during the corrupt peace that followed the Terror that its old walls became a grim prison for criminal or diseased girls. It was this that gave the sense of disgrace and the character of sinister and poignant melancholy which makes a purgatory of this place from which goodness once radiated.

When Vincent with his group of priests took possession of the old leper-house, that no longer contained a single leper, it became immediately one of the most frequented and famous spots in Paris, and in France as well. It was a favorite meeting-place for ecclesiastics and also for the devout of the. laity; it became almost fashionable, with a sort of spiritual fashionableness; it was the place where the rule and the good manners of piety were to be found at their best, much what the Place Royale was for the promenades and the fine manners of society. The arcades were different, to be sure, but they sheltered a numerous assemblage. You could easily distinguish in that quarter those who were going to Saint-Lazare from those who were returning. Once the door of that retreat opened, or rather should we say doors since there was need of several, the visitor found himself in the midst of the life and activity of a great bee-hive. The spirit was contagious and the new-comer was caught up by it. This activity was silent, or at least without the slightest uproar; there were doubtless moments of incoherence and confusion, but in general the activities of the house were carried on in well-controlled serenity.

Most of those who came knew their way about. There was a complicated system of galleries, corridors, large and small hallways, all the details of a labyrinth covering several floors, from cellar to garret, making up the formidable whole of Saint-Lazare. But to most of the visitors it was their own familiar parish; they could have walked blindfolded through the whole structure, knowing the dark, gloomy passages as well as those others that permitted of quick

movement, the apartments where the sunlight streamed from high windows upon the tiled floors which it bathed with its purifying rays.

Everything here was on a large scale; nothing cramped or stuffy. One came suddenly upon long vistas of fifty or more yards in extent; the doors were so many and so close together that one could not venture to count them, much less to open them. Windows there were windows by the hundreds, a thousand or more, perhaps. With the stairways it was the same; the same architectural sense of size and strength with which to meet the problems of time and use. Such stairways were made for the tread of unnumbered feet during an eternity of time; large, straight stairways, indestructible, with huge landings; the balustrades of oak were as heavy and rich as those of stone at the Louvre or as those in the splendid residences of the Marais quarter; the hand-rails were of the size of a man's arm and were like polished agate from the passing of hands over them through the years.

By the stairways and galleries came and went, in a constant stream, first of all those connected with the house, from the chapel or the refectory, from the services or from visits to the infirmary: the barber and the sacristan, the apothecary and the tailor, lay brothers, domestics some bringing wood, others linen or furnishings, each making in his own way the little journey required by his task.

Up above this busy ant-hill and separate from it, although attached to it, were the priests of the Mission, of all the Missions of which Saint-Lazare was then the bustling, active center, at once the focus, the depot, the place of refuge the point from which every one departed, and to which all returned. The Associations of both men and women were increasing rapidly in numbers, and their directors were constantly coming to remain at Saint-Lazare after finishing one task and before setting out on the next. They reported to Vincent on the last completed work and consulted with him before beginning again.

But of course this floating population did not fill the edifice, which was by now fast becoming international in its scope and centering about itself so many of the desires, interests and needs of the Catholic world. Nor did Vincent any longer belong exclusively to

the works that he himself had produced. Moreover, with the increase from year to year of the importance of his own foundations and of the groups fostered by them, it was with the greatest difficulty that he kept abreast of them. He now found himself in the position of having to direct organizations for which he was not responsible and which were only half alive, which their founders tremblingly brought to him. Seeing their feebleness, he had not the heart to leave them to their fate.

This will explain the presence at Saint-Lazare of so many persons who were most manifestly "not of the household" and about whom one would naturally say: "Who are they? What are they doing here?"

It has now become evident that one must expect to find at Saint-Lazare a. cross section of life. There were the hoods and habits of every order, preaching and begging friars, thin, close-shaved laborers, bearded giants, Capuchins from every part of Europe, north and south. There were penitents in white, blue, and black, with hoods, with skullcaps, with tunics of somber color; in garments of serge and wool of every cut and of all shades. Here were Sisters of every order gathered about their Abbesses, representatives of the hospitals and of the cloisters, men and women under vows who had taken long journeys in order to be there, and who the day before were strangers to each other, but who now found themselves completely one and yet so different in the details of the girdles, scapulars, cords, crosses, hearts, Agnus Dei, skull-and-cross-bones that they wore. In this miniature Tower of Babel all languages were heard translated, when necessary, into Latin. There were sun-burned pilgrims, all dusty from the paths of Spain or Italy, with their staves and palmer-shells, their skins burned to orange or terra-cotta, who had made the journey of a hundred leagues in order to look at the saint for five minutes, touch him, and then take up their journey again. These people either wandered through the corridors, full of hope and confidence, or disturbed in mind retired to some dark corner; it was like the bustling quay of a harbor. Who would venture to drive them away?

Not all of them, however, looked like companions one would care to trust. Mendicants with wolfish eyes, their breasts and foreheads

tattooed with cabalistic signs, grasping their crucifixes by the top, as they might a dagger. But no one disturbed them or questioned them. They were at least the poor and wretched, the journeymen of distress. And who else might not be there? A bandit on the road to redemption, or a former galley-slave, one of those discharged or escaped criminals from the fleet, perhaps, who felt the homesick desire to see his old chaplain? And would he not have been received with open arms?

Further down toward the kitchens you would jostle against purveyers of meat, vegetables, vinegar, against serving-maids and scullions. Outside, at the doors opening on the streets, would be seen a line of derelicts waiting until the time when their little pots would be filled with stew and hot soup. Above and below were busy worlds in which a whole universe might be mirrored, a world that varied with the season, with the time, and with the events about them.

His Famous Tuesdays and the Retreats

At the suggestion of his friend Monsieur Olier, the future founder of Saint-Sulpice, Vincent invited the candidates for ordination to a conference, once a week, on Tuesdays, with a view to helping them and leading them to a greater fervor of faith. These conferences became so popular that it was necessary to choose from among the young men who presented themselves. Among those selected was a young, blond, red-cheeked Burgundian who, standing near the folds of a curtain, listened with interest to Vincent. His name was Bossuet. What a master, and what a pupil!

The conferences acquired such fame that Cardinal Richelieu, who was always suspicious of fame other than his own, decided to hear "this celebrity"; he was so enlightened by the discourse and so delighted with it that immediately afterward he said to the Duchess d'Aiguillon, "I had already a high opinion of Monsieur Vincent, but since I have heard him I have an entirely new conception of him." It was the seductive modesty of a chaplain in threadbare cassock who had conquered His Eminence, a man both jealous and fastidious. The clearness and simplicity of Vincent's faith, however, would have vanquished any one. Under an outward appearance of weakness, timidity, helplessness, he moved steadily towards triumphant success in everything that he did.

After his Tuesday lectures had received approval I was about to say acquittal from the grand inquisitor, from Richelieu, that is, Vincent quite calmly added to this work the establishment of retreats intended at first solely for his own priests; for it was their welfare, their interests always that aroused his initiative. But if, later, others wish to share in the benefit, why all the better; Vincent saw no objection. He aided them cheerfully. When one has discovered a spring and has then tapped it to serve his own needs, he can always let others drink there. The majority of Vincent's undertakings began in that way. The method of their development was logical and inevitable, even when it had not been foreseen. His projects would never have reached the form that astonishes us today, had they not been planned for some special and limited end, that at first sight seemed to circumscribe their growth.

The retreats were scarcely started before they took on, almost in spite of Vincent, an extraordinary growth and developed into something quite different from anything that had been heretofore seen. It was like a train of powder and an explosion. It became a sort of spiritual fashion and frenzy. There was nothing profane in it to mar its spiritual quality, nothing impure, but it moved with so strong and swift a current that both sides, actors and auditors alike, were swept away by it, always excepting the creator of it all, who was not in the least disturbed, and who, as the agitation increased about him, became more serene. A great, heterogeneous crowd invaded Saint-Lazare, composed of people one would never have thought to see there but who did not seem surprised at meeting each other there, still less at elbowing each other with a democratic freedom that would not have been tolerated elsewhere for an instant.

"On the benches of the same refectory there were crowded together, day by day, side by side and without any embarrassment, young and old, lay and ecclesiastic, doctors of the Sorbonne and the illiterate; noblemen, rustics, workingmen, magistrates, men of fashion, recluses, page and knight, valet and master."

All classes were there and they mingled in friendly spirit in this house, as they would never have done elsewhere, even in church. Since all these faithful, during the time of the retreat, slept and ate in the house, one can well picture the feverish work and excitement that ran through the great edifice from top to bottom. There must have been and yet we can not be sure of it for some, perhaps for many, a dispensation from the rule that persons at the retreat must sleep there; but far from wishing to avoid the rule, they observed it. They seemed to like it. Even more than in the injunction to eat together, they were eager to take part in the program of penitence to which they submitted with deep ardor and joy. All the rooms in the edifice were filled, and some were even occupied by several persons. Special dormitories were established, and yet all who came were not lodged.

That the moral profit was great would not be contested; but did Vincent receive enough in a material way to defray the expenses of the retreat and warrant his undertaking its difficulties? No. If one

excludes the well-to-do, who were open-handed and paid triple for the service of God, what was given was little or nothing, so that from a practical point of view it was clear that Vincent was not doing well. But did that weigh upon him, when his object was to move and to enrich souls? He did not count the loss at all. Sometimes, as the charge threatened to grow too heavy, his friends begged him to give up the enterprise. They might as well have attacked his faith. What appeared improvidence gave with him the effect of well-tested certitude.

Most of the great religious movements have been started on nothing and have been supported from scanty and irregular revenues; yet they have, step by step, made the conquest of the world. The creations of Vincent, stamped with his genius, as they were, and representing all that was wise and prudent, yet lived on in this manner, from hand to mouth, and they were not merely alive, but they endured, prospered, spread, without his ever being assured that he could extricate himself from the dangers that threatened them or that might lessen their usefulness.

One might have supposed that slender means was one condition of Vincent's success. Even the sanest of minds might have shaken under the burden. But it did not affect Vincent. He was never more intelligent and calm than when everything went badly and all were in despair. And in what an astonishing and splendid way he always faced the danger and saved the situation! Instead of "putting on the brakes," reducing expenses, or going feverishly into economies that would gain him nothing, he redoubled his generosity and gave more; he was bold in expenditure. "God will give, God will pay."

"Father," said some of his missionaries uneasily, "we are taking grafts too many persons for this retreat."

"Pro Deo! Exactly, my brother! They all wish to save their souls."

"Monsieur," exclaimed his steward in dismay, "I haven't a penny for tomorrow!"

"Not a penny? Oh, monsieur, that is good news. God be blessed. It is He who will now be steward. He will supply us. And far better than you or I could do it. Go back to your office."

One day, however, Vincent was really disturbed by the complaints of his colleagues, that to please him they were admitting too many persons.

"Well," said Vincent, "today I shall act as porter myself. Yes, I will receive the applicants for the retreat and choose among them."

But never were so many received, and amiably received, as on that day.

"What could I do?" he said. "I could not make up my mind to send any one away."

"And yet, monsieur," grumbled a brother, "there is not a room left in the house."

"Oh, yes, my brother. There is mine. Let some one have it."

The next day, as usual, money fell from heaven and in an unexpected quantity. More than they needed. There was money left over.

Vincent laughed. "You see how it came?" With a little urging he might have said "Enough, dear God! Be reasonable. This is enough."

The popularity of the retreats was so great that more than eight hundred persons on the average attended each one, and the movement did not diminish. The latest retreat seemed always more successful and fruitful than the one before. They kept their faithful followers, attracted new ones, and, while still keeping their democratic character, they gained in quality.

"There was not in Paris a priest of merit who did not wish to be there; nor a man of distinction."

Bossuet first went there as a seminary student, to be a listener, but he soon mounted his first pulpit and was heard by a distinguished audience, among whom were the great of the world. Flechier in his own times found no more flattering homage to offer to the clergy of France than to attribute its "splendor and glory" to the person under whose eyes he himself was trained.

After the last words of the closing sermon, the retreat ended. Some who followed it were eager to be off with their new treasure, while others were sorry not to remain and double theirs, but all returned home. Would Vincent now snatch a little rest in his house from which so many guests were departing? No, not even the departure of the guests left the house quiet, and it never became entirely calm. Putting aside the days of unusual stress, the mere normal life of the place was enough to stimulate and occupy Vincent beyond the limits of human strength.

During this period which had been given over to men, the women were necessarily neglected and could not see their cherished Father. But they now came in great numbers, impatient to make up for lost time. They came from all classes and with every sort of problem, from the pettiest to the most exacting. The greatest ladies would come for confession, for communion, to lay before him family difficulties, problems of conscience, or personal interests, for the most serious reasons as well as for the most trivial. While those of high rank must be satisfied, the lowly born must be given equal attention, that no favoritism might be shown; indeed those of humble birth were often of the greater worth. To all Vincent showed such even kindness that the indiscreet wearied themselves more in their talk than he did in listening to them.

It pleased him to see in the finer spirits successors to Madame de Gondi and Madame Maignelais and the others who had been his spiritual friends, and whose beautiful souls he had directed. In a different way he had equal joy in giving direction to simple souls, to the wives of small shopkeepers, for example. He could not take a step outside of his door, without their watching for him and tracking him down.

"Where is he? Have you seen him?"

He would at times conceal himself, but only to hear eventually the cry, "Here he is!" And then with the opening of doors and hastening feet, there began a jostling and kneeling and weeping, as they pressed hard upon him. It was a contest as to who could come the closest and take his hands, press them, kiss them. He tried to retreat, touched but confused.

"Well, well. You wish then "

They stood off a little from him to get a better look. What! Was he no taller than that? No bigger than that! Could that really be Monsieur Vincent? that little, short man, already stout, with thick hair, the feet of a carter, who smiles from a toothless mouth above a white bearded chin, and whose cheeks are like an old nurse's?

Yes, it is he. But he is beautiful, really, like some peasant Saint of the furrows, or humble Venerable of the gutters. He is friendly and would like to attend to each one at the same moment, but everything combines to prevent it. One has come for orders and another asks advice; others wish permissions, addresses, names; one asks for a certain key, and another for a bit of news that must be intrusted to his ear alone. Then there are the strange and unexpected visits of the good people who have embroidered a purse for him or brought him a chasuble, or a surplice of lace.

Those presents! In vain did he dislike them and forbid them. The gifts poured in just the same, early and late, from Paris, from the provinces, from foreign countries; objects of value and of no value, pious pictures, scapulars, medals, candles; quantities of touching little things which poor people brought him in fulfillment of a vow, or in remembrance of their country, such as baskets of vegetables.

Vincent took them and kept none of them. If it were flowers: "Water them and put them in the chapel." If fruits: "Here is dessert for my invalids." If bread: "Give it to the poor while it is still fresh." If eggs and milk: "To the foundlings." He had a room that was kept full of such offerings. And there were other difficulties: over those who brought powders, sachets, elixirs, herbs and waters "that heal all maladies." There were the bone-doctors, who "would surely cure Monsieur Vincent of his pains and his limping." And suddenly a man arrives sweating, booted, muddy from head to foot.

"What does he wish?"

"Monsieur," said the porter, "it is a courier from Lorraine."

"From Lorraine! Come, come, my friend!"

He signs for him to come in, but the porter pulls his sleeve.

"What now?"

"Monsieur, it is that duke who, you know, has come twice and has waited in vain for you."

"I don't understand. Is that he who is kicking at the door with his boot?"

"Oh, no, monsieur, that is a poor madman whom I have shut in; he says that he is the Pope and is annoyed at not seeing you."

"A madman! God has sent him. Right away after the messenger from Lorraine, I will see him. Before the duke -"

Thus I have sketched for you Saint-Lazare and all its teeming life, of which Vincent was head and heart and sovereign ruler. To the constant labors and cares of Saint-Lazare he must add the fatigues of the long journeys which he freely undertook, whenever he thought his presence needed: to Lorraine, a country always dear to him, to Trois-Eveches, Franche-Comte, Burgundy, Champagne, to Picardy, to any of those unfortunate countries which, taken and re-taken so often, are like a well-gnawed bone, ravaged to a degree of desolation that could only be understood by one who was in the midst of their filth and ruins.

Vincent went personally to these places; he knew the horrors of war even as Callot sketched them. Like Callot, Vincent, had his hand possessed the skill, would have given us what that rigorous artist did in depicting the exterior misery of such life, but he would have touched also with spiritual intuition the interior desolation of the victims of war. He had seen beneath the wounds and agonies of the flesh, the flaming roofs, the broken walls, and had beheld the broken hearts, the souls in the throes of martyrdom; of all this he had memories etched more deeply than those of the engraver. These pictures of the inner life he alone saw; they wounded him deeply and left there records more poignant than Callot's series of hangings and tortures. Even when he had left the smoking and desolate hearths, the vision of inner desolation pursued him. As he prayed

God to restore peace to the lands of France, he prayed also for the redemption of the souls of those who had caused this desolation.

After praying for the innocent he bore in mind the guilty also. He remembered them all: the hordes of bandits, Croatian, Bohemian, Hungarian, Swedish, Italian, the pick of the mercenary armies, and those helmeted and crowned condottieri, lords of disaster, the Wallensteins, the Piccolimini, the Mansfields, and others who fought under their standards of vulture or griffin, all of whom aroused the compassion of Vincent and appealed to his generous heart. He prayed for their repentance and for God's pardon of them. The redemption of these brutal men was in his eyes the only fit recompense for the sufferings of their victims.

Old Age

Vincent had stretched each day to its utmost, he had encroached upon the night as well to accomplish his work, but the years were passing so quickly that he was surprised and alarmed. Old age had come upon him. Not that it made him change his attitude or his habits for, instead of relaxing, he redoubled his efforts. His discipline was that of his earlier life.

At the farther end of one of the momentarily deserted galleries of Saint-Lazare, impressive in its silence at this hour of dawn, there is a small, low door; it is never locked and the lightest touch opens it. From its looks, it might be either a hermit's or a prisoner's cell. The two broken-down chairs, the wooden table, the mattress without sheets, and the brick floor suggest the prison; a few religious pictures pasted on the wall and a crucifix hanging from a nail would point to a hermit's cell. At all events, it is inhabited, and by a man. He is stretched out in the corner, asleep, his face to the wall. The poor old back is bent, and he looks broken with fatigue even as he sleeps. An old man of the lower classes one would decide from the peasant's head, the rough skin of his neck, and the coarse linen of his shirt; a servant, perhaps.

After all he is not asleep, he is speaking in a low tone to himself. Or if not to himself, to whom? It is hard to catch his words, for he is tired and whispers wearily. Sighs occasionally escape him. Is he ill? Is it grief? Both perhaps. Certainly here is a suffering human being. Suddenly he turns and sees that it is dawn.

It is Vincent! Everything is explained. He suffers indeed, but without complaining. He was praying. He listens; there is a clock somewhere, striking four; then another strikes and another. It is as though the litany of the day were being recited. Vincent is now sitting up and is attentive to the sounds, among which voices are discernible. Why does he not spring out of bed? Why that indolence? For what does he wait before arising? For sufficient strength to rise.

When he stands up, it is with such pain that if he followed his own

impulse, he would fall back on his pallet and lie there in his suffering. But he is on his feet now, swaying unsteadily on his thin, hermit's legs, which nearly give way under him. Merciful heavens, what legs! They are twisted, deformed, wrinkled with age, scarred with the shackles that he wore long ago when a slave on the Barbary coast, and with those that later he allowed to be riveted on him at Marseilles, when he took the place of the freed galley-slave. His poor legs tremble so that he has to lean against the wall for support. He breaks into a sweat which covers even his bare feet, swollen, corded with heavy veins, calloused from the pilgrimages of fifty years. He pulls himself together little by little, and gradually his body begins to function; he is able to put on his black woollen socks and the heavy shoes which are still dusty from their last service. He takes from its nail with as much reverence as though it were a stole the worn and patched cassock that comprises his whole wardrobe. Dressed in this, and placing upon his white head the old skull-cap that has now become almost legendary, he is ready for "his day." If it must be hard, grant, O Lord, at least that it seem light to Vincent.

Once out of his cell and walking down the corridor, Vincent finds his strength return; the stairway seems to enliven him and he goes down it like a boy, sometimes two steps at a time. Going straight to the chapel he is the first to say, before candle light, his paternoster. For an hour he remains on his knees absorbed in prayer. Such should prayer be, as it is for him, food and drink, the first need of the soul. It nourishes him and helps him to regain his strength. He then goes to confession.

"Everyday? He?"

Every day, for he knows the need of a spotless conscience. He says mass; it is a shining moment, a dedicated action. When he touches the altar, he leaves the thought of earth behind, he is released from the world and sees only God. He loses the sense of his own personality. There are others who come to hear this marvelous mass of his, and they are stirred by the holy emotion that seizes and transfigures him; they, too, are illumined by the light about him, they receive a reflection of his graces, they share his exaltation.

This joy in the mass is so intense that sometimes Vincent prolongs it. He feels the need of a second mass, but this time, instead of saying it, he serves it, a humble, white-haired acolyte. The hand that lifted the chalice now rings the bell.

The chapel itself is a solace to Vincent. Here he remains in prayer for two, three, and four hours, until those realms of detachment are reached, those immaterial heights, where earth is left behind and one begins to feel the breath of a new world, an unknown freshness of life. What place has time in all this? It counts for nothing, it loses its weight. Time, the reaper, swift as an archangel, poises and glides like the lightest down in the blue of the heavens.

But the needs of the world draw Vincent from his blessed state and he is obliged to return to them. He goes back to his cell. The same spirit of devotion that made him kneel in the chapel places him at his table, an old, wooden work-bench scarred and ink-spattered and polished by the rubbing of his sleeves, at which so many of his inspirations came to him, and where he built so wisely. At this desk he works, writes, looks through his papers, reviews his accounts, draws up statements, approves petitions, asks for favors, grants relief, studies his receipts and expenditures. The hours fly by. His careful, vigorous handwriting, meanwhile, covers large account-books and reams of paper bearing the royal water-mark or the monogram of Christ. He heeds neither the heat nor the cold, dressed exactly the same in winter or summer; he takes no especial care of himself, sits with his feet on the cold tiles, using no rug. At night the draughts blow around him until they sometimes extinguish his candle.

Some one knocks. A little while before he had to tear himself from his prie-Dieu; now he has to leave his desk. He must go over the entire place, examining it from top to bottom, mounting stairs and walking corridors; he has walked miles through this labyrinth countless miles as far as from Paris to Rome, but each day it is the same route. At every floor he is interrupted; little boys, flushing with pleasure, ready with a word of felicitation; little girls eager to astonish him with a hymn they have learned; mothers who hold their babies in their arms impatiently waiting for his blessing; sick people, who have sunk wearily upon the steps to await his coming

to be healed, or who, perhaps, falling asleep, dream of him; here are paralytics lying helpless on the stretchers that brought them in, only the sparkle in their eyes showing life within their inert bodies.

He goes in his walk past the dogs of the house, strays that have slipped into the kitchen at the hour when the stew is cooking, as though they, too, were making retreat; from a window-ledge, between two pots of flowers, a cat springs down to stop Vincent with its loud mewing and demand a caress. In the further court might be heard the whinny of a horse or the bray of an ass, the crowing of a cock, a splashing fountain. White pigeons edge the roof. The old walls the remains of leper days give shelter to swallows and sparrows. Simple distractions and duties are here indeed! They delay the saint, but he feels no impatience. Every creature has the right to affection, whether man or beast; each receives his proper share. The humblest come first. The others come afterward and they will not be forgotten, but those in the corridors and on the landings, and the beggars at the door will take precedence over them.

As for these others, who make such grand entry here, there are many of them. Some must have their private interviews and must be greeted, congratulated, and given seats. There may be bishops, archbishops, canons, the aristocracy of the sword as well as of the cross, ladies of great devotion, whose prie-Dieu is in the choir of the church, heads of orders, priests, in fact all the array of the devout, both decorated and humble; and each one of them, from Cardinal to clerk, from princess to bourgeoise, from duke to knight, has his own importance and often his own special virtue.

"But are his duties confined to the house? How about his outside work? Does it not call him? Will he forget it?"

"What," we hear him cry, "the afternoon already half gone! How neglectful I am! Miserable I" And off he starts.

"Monsieur Vincent, Monsieur!" calls some one who is searching for him.

"He was there not five minutes ago. He has gone now."

He has escaped by a small stairway and through a little door which he uses when he wishes to leave and not be stopped. He is now in the busy, bustling street, with its twists and turns, its pavements, its heavy horses, its carriages and its whips, its push-carts, its market-women with ready fists, the portals of its churches, which he would so like to enter and he will at the first opportunity the scutcheons over great houses where so much useless wealth is tied up. But all this is not for him today. He passes the archways of sordid lodgings, the quarters of luxury and of direst poverty. When one visit has been made, others must follow. The places are so far apart, so different, that they would demand, were it possible, a score of pairs of legs, of heads and of hearts and understandings, for which he, the "Proteus" of Charity, must be sufficient. He has no time for adjustments, he must go straight from the drawing-room to the shop, from the monastery to the tavern; he will be seated here in a gilded arm-chair, there on a stool, here in the stall of a chapter house, there on a garden-bench. He will leave an assemblage of notables to join a group of criminals. He will be found in good places and in evil, now presiding and now in the audience, but always he will be attentive, friendly, and wise, as much master of himself as of others.

It is not Vincent's task to pass quickly in review all the needs, all the vices, all the passions of distressed human creatures, to whatever rank in life they may be attached; to stop, say a word of encouragement, rub his hands, and pass on thinking, "There, that is over." No, such is not Vincent's method. He is the kind of person who can never sufficiently complete what he undertakes; he is obstinate in his following up of what is once begun. He works for the future rather more than for the present. He must act for the need of the moment, but he must also look forward, observe, note down, remember. This is a severe strain, it creates mental tension, but he must show no sign of it. While he is dressing a wound his mind is busy with quite other matters that must be faced; his thoughts are with one problem, his hands with another; to perform double duty in this manner became to him an exercise in professional skill. He excelled at it.

He returns at last, late, very late, and enters as quickly as he left. Hunger, you suppose, urges him on for you have noticed that since

morning he has eaten nothing. You are wrong. He eats nothing or next to nothing. He is hastening back because the day is drawing to a close and he fears that his household will be uneasy at his continued absence. His companions must seize him at the wicket before he gets to his cell, to see that he has food. Nearly always the supper-hour of the community has passed and there are only fragments of food left. His companions are apologetic, but he says:

"All the better. I prefer what is left over!"

After his last mouthful which is exactly like his first, he goes to his room, or his companions take him to it.

"There! You must go to bed, Monsieur! Promise that you will, in the name of Heaven!"

However, when the door is closed, he does not go to bed. He does not collapse at the end of his exhausting day but, as though refreshed, he begins a new one; he settles himself and begins. He writes and writes, while the bronze clocks register, as they have done so many thousands of times before, all the hours of repose that approach him but which he does not accept. Will he go to bed at all? And will he sleep? Really, he does not himself in the least know. It will be done, if at all, against his will and hardly with his knowledge. A moment comes, it always escapes him and he can never say at what time when consciousness fails him and he falls upon his pallet. He must have slept a little, for he reproaches himself with it when he awakens, as though he had quite overslept:

"Come, Benedicamus. A beautiful day!" he says to himself, and he comes forth an immortal Lazarus at the beginning of each dawn. Short as these nights were, and crowded with work, Vincent at least passed them in a room where, weary and old, he yet could sit down and sleep and have the shelter of a refuge that he could call his own. But beginning with the time when he undertook his work for abandoned infants, he gave up this solace.

The house called La Couche was the only place at that time where one could bring the little outcasts who were more shunned than if they had been lepers. This establishment was conducted by a widow, assisted by two rough and avaricious servants. The young

unfortunates who fell into their hands did not remain long with them. Either stricken, they died at once from lack of food and care; or they were sold to strolling mountebanks, who subjected them often to a veritable martyrdom, or to vile creatures, whose profession it was to do away with them, or to offer them for hideous demoniac practices, without mentioning the introducing of them secretly into homes and the fraudulent conniving in the changing of the order of successions or inheritances.

Vincent resolved to save both the bodies and the souls of these innocents, who were not even baptized, whose double massacre, physical and moral, went on unpunished. He wished at first to take care of all of them, but in this he was disappointed, since they were too numerous. Only a dozen could be taken, and how were they to be chosen, how dare one choose? They were drawn by lot and the first of the elect twelve, like the apostles were confided to Mademoiselle Le Gras, their adoptive mother, and her Daughters of Charity, who began in 1638 the work of the Enfants-Trouves, or, as one would preferably say, the Enfants-Cherches, the name for which Vincent always showed a preference.

He was now more than sixty years old, and it was when he had dedicated himself to this great work of fatherhood that he gave up the rest of his sleep. Vincent had observed that children are rarely abandoned in the day-time. The parents at fault avoid being seen with the infants, and even if they were sure of not being detected in the daytime, their deeds being evil, they would naturally avoid the light, which is itself a reproach to their uneasy consciences. Darkness has always been the friend of crime. He began to walk the streets of Paris by night. The profounder and darker the night, the better would it be for his quest. He was especially successful in the winter time, when the cold was such that no one wished to leave the indoor warmth. He would have gone out in any weather without a cloak, except that now he was walking the streets for a particular reason and a cloak was necessary, not for him but for the infants. He must be able to revive them without losing a moment and, as he had only two arms, he could not gather up as many babies as was sometimes necessary. His cloak allowed him to carry three or four; more sometimes, as he had ordered an ample garment. This cloak was his only luxury. It was made of heavy, firm

cloth, its large folds falling to the ground. When both wet and filled with babies, it was no light weight. It was as heavy as a sack of flour, but the miller, Vincent, found it light. He no more felt its weight on his shoulders than the fisherman feels the weight of his nets when he leaves his boat. With its folds, its sweep, and its miraculous catch of little fishes, Vincent's mantle was indeed a net, one that was cast in goodness and love, and that never failed of a catch.

It was generally alone, or accompanied by one of his priests, that Vincent made his nocturnal rounds. Think of the nights in the Paris of that time, a city completely wrapped in darkness, silent, treacherous, empty, with only ruffians abroad or bandits ready for theft or murder. To be sure, the mounted guard went by with the flaring light of his torch, but the ring of his horses' hoofs and his light gave warning to criminals to hide themselves. Vincent, at night, resembled these prowlers not a little, with his suspicious way of clinging to walls, bending over, straightening up, even at times attempting to run. The little dark lantern that hung from his girdle completed the resemblance. More than one brigand was deceived by this light and took Vincent for a night-prowler, or for some merchant trying to get home in safety; in either case he rushed at him. But when the brigand recognized the popular saint, he would beg Vincent's pardon and call to his comrades who were lurking about after prey:

"Let him pass; it is Monsieur Vincent."

"Ah!" exclaimed the bandits, and in that exclamation expressed so much respect and disappointment that Vincent himself, confused and saddened, could only thank them, but in a tone that implied his reproof:

"Oh, my friends, my friends!"

As these street-prowlers knew quite well for what Vincent was searching, they often helped him, suggesting directions.

"At the cross-roads, three hundred paces from here, under the signboard of the Pot Fleuri, there is one."

"Monsieur, not later than yesterday but it's far from here, in the blind alley of the Mauvaises Paroles I heard two infants crying."

Vincent groaned and expressed his resentment:

"You admit that, you hard-hearted man, and you did not take them up! You left them there! Yet you know well where I live. Oh, how cruel men can be!"

"If it had only been possible, Monsieur!" the brigand said in self-defense. "But there are too many! And there's my own job however, perhaps some time I will to please you."

Sometimes these ruffians actually placed the foundlings in Vincent's arms; at other times they took him by the hand and led him through a web of obscure streets, whose windings only these professionals knew, and they showed him a rubbish-heap where they had seen infants abandoned. Sometimes these were already dead and decomposing, or they had disappeared before he arrived. If they still breathed, Vincent took them in his arms and fled as though he were indeed a thief. Often his prey was contested; hungry dogs showed their teeth at him, or fierce street cats tried to attack him with their claws; rats were there for their share and were emboldened to fight. All the hunters of flesh contested with Vincent their human prey which they were either on the point of devouring or upon which they had already begun. He carried on his contest with them blindly, as best he could; in winter through tempests of snow, in summer escaping the claws of bats and the bites of flies. So much trouble was expended for so little return; a meager prize indeed.

It was desolating for Vincent and the companion who accompanied him to think that in the slums of this great city, throughout its whole extent, there were tiny, bleating lambs from the flocks of God, who died alone, and they were able to save only a fraction of them. Vincent and his companion, who always went on foot, were discouraged that they left so much undone, but even with a carriage and carts at their disposal they could not have entirely cleared away the wounded and the dead from this battle-ground of the new-born.

"But give to each hour its full measure, its pull on the oar! A long

pull now! Tomorrow we shall cross the Seine into a new quarter. We will search the left bank near Saint-Germain; the Rue de la Petite-Truanderie; and at the foot of Mont Ste. Genevieve. There will certainly be some there. Oh, they will be there! If only we arrive in time! If we can do nothing better, let us take as many as possible from La Couche."

Such words and many others like them did Vincent whisper to himself, while he carried his precious burden with the same tenderness as he would have borne the Blessed Sacrament. Meanwhile he stumbled over stones, stepped in filth or stagnant water or sewage.

As dawn whitened the sky he would reach Saint-Lazare, where for hours a light had been burning at a window, awaiting his return. What a sight was this old, worn-out man, waxen-pale, or of an apoplectic red, the veins standing out at his temples, on his cheeks mingled sweat and tears! His shoes and socks no longer held together; he was mud from his heels to his knees; his cloak was smeared and framed in mud, but not dishonored by it, a garment which was fringed and sprinkled with stars, its back glorified as by the rays of a monstrance.

And when Vincent would open his cloak and disclose a head no bigger than a fist and in its folds reveal a little naked body, enveloped as in a sack, it was a moment of excitement, of expectation. The little fingers that were so frail, so tiny, often held with unbelievable tenacity to the sheltering cloak wrapped about them; often it required extreme care to detach them from the cloth, from which they would not loose their hold, as though, poor things, they feared in their sub-conscious selves, to be thrown upon the rubbish-heap. Sometimes an infant, held close against Vincent, sucked at the crucifix at his girdle. Often when his cloak was opened the infant was found to be drawing its last breath and the bearer did not dare move it.

"Quick, water!" he ordered.

And as he poured three drops upon its head it would droop in his arms like a flower watered too late.

But when by good luck a child would revive, and seemed to stir, what anxious care! It was warmed at a fire, bathed, clothed. A sudden cry would escape the tiny mouth and a smile follow its grimace.

"He is alive, alive!" cries Vincent exultingly, raising aloft his arms. And he holds up the child as an infant-king is exhibited to his subjects; he caresses and speaks to him and tenderly kisses him. For it is the Child Jesus he sees.

His Last Days

Monsieur Vincent had looked old even when in the robust maturity of middle age. At fifty he looked much more so. At sixty he was snow white; quite an old fellow now. His clothes hung loosely upon his body, which was withering and wasting away; by contrast his head seemed to grow larger; the great brow, which had always been remarkable, now took on an extraordinary and impressive breadth and seemed fairly to stretch the skullcap above it. His large ears appeared to droop in weariness, as though under the weight of too many confessions, their lobes lengthening toward the collar of his shirt. His temples were marked by the blue veins that crossed them; his cheeks were so sunken that the cheek-bones seemed about to pierce the skin; his toothless mouth was now an old mouth, fit only for soups and the mumbling of words. On his chin was the short, sharp beard of an old sailor. His nose, that famous nose, powerful and thick, recalled more and more, as it grew bulbous, Ghirlandajo's portrait of the angelic old man of the raspberry nose and the charming child who is about to caress him. These marks of age and decay were offset by the great brow of shining marble, where all the waning forces of the once vigorous body seemed now to concentrate as though they would join more closely the spirit; this force surged, too, toward his eyes, which glowed deeply and more brilliantly than ever from the fires of his heart and the flame of his spirit.

Three times in 1616, in 1644, in 1649 he was seriously ill and each time his strong constitution and his will to live brought him through. As age advanced upon him this strong will to live weakened, not that he turned away from life, but as his strength ebbed he ceased to fight. A very definite spirit of resignation now characterized him, a sort of fiat which already bespoke serenity. When he saw the end approaching, he gathered together all his forces in order, up to the last moment, at first to deserve and then to try to endure the martyrdom of his body, which had now become "a tissue of pain." For thirty years he had had a constant battle with his legs, which he had treated so mercilessly. Finally for his visits in the country he had to ride on horseback and later, in Paris, he was obliged, desolation in his soul, to use the carriage the Duchess

d'Aiguillon had given him. When he first got into it, he struck his breast, as if to accuse himself, saying: "This disgraces me." The day came when the legs that he had condemned to such intolerable labors could no longer bear him to the carriage; they were swollen and covered with sores which formed one great infested area. From this he had suffered for a long time; he concealed it and would not have it treated and, indeed, the disease was incurable.

Despite his protests his ailment was cared for, but in such a manner as hardly to afford relief. In order to reduce the fever from which he suffered constantly, his room was made into a sort of steam bath, and this was done even during the heat of summer. One wonders how this old man, with his worn-out heart and frail body, endured the moist heat, which was enough to suffocate even a young and strong man. It must be one of the secrets in the lives of saints. When he came from out this punishment, to which he was subjected not only by day, but by night, his straw mattress, his sheets, and his bedding were drenched. He himself reeked with sweat as though he had been in a hot bath. The serous fluid that had collected in the joints of his legs while he was prone, now began to flow freely and increased his sufferings. He was more tried than Job, and yet, with all this mistreatment, for a considerable time he had the energy to get up every day at four o'clock, his hour, in order to pray with his household, and on Tuesdays to preside at their conferences.

He even received the ladies of his congregations who came for the consolation of hearing his voice once more, and who thought that each visit would probably be the last. And yet he lived on. His mind was as lucid and clear as when he was in normal health. He wrote or dictated letters to his Missions. Two letters among the last that he wrote were for two persons who for different reasons he had much in his heart. One letter was to his patron and friend, the Commander of the Galleys, Monsieur de Gondi, who for years following the death of his wife had been a religious; the other was to his scandalous former pupil, now become the Cardinal de Retz. The former, in exile at Clermont, submitted humbly to the loss of Richelieu's favor; the latter was then in Rome and had already entered upon the path of penance and redemption. Both would have liked being present to receive these farewells and counsels from their great director in person, but in receiving them by letter they

had the consolation of knowing that at least they were not forgotten.

Vincent forgot nothing, nor any one. He recalled everything except the evil that had been done him. He denied himself more and more, and God, whom he had begged to take him, "for Thou hast for so long a time, O Lord, endured me here on earth," seemed at last to hear him and to grant his request, not only by dissolving from day to day the bonds of the flesh that still held him, but by removing, after the passing of so many others, the very last of his human attachments, two of the tenderest and most enduring of all.

The death of his old disciple, Monsieur Portail, followed close upon that of Mademoiselle Le Gras, whom he had loved as a daughter. He knew that he would not long survive them. They had gone first only to open for him the door and to prepare for him a mansion in his Father's house.

Vincent's body, the lower part of which was already dead, seemed to him, with its inertness and corruption, to be even now preparing him for the tomb. He could no longer walk. He wished, however, as long as his arms could move, to employ them in God's work. He requested crutches and used them with all the vigor of the weak who has been made strong, refusing help. He, the shepherd of the Landes, now a man of eighty years, moved himself about victoriously upon these new props; by dragging his shaking legs along the flagstones he managed to gain the chapel, to hear mass, to receive communion, holding himself erect and steady.

Then a time came when the crutches no longer served him; he was too weak to use them. His friends thought it would please him to have his room transformed into a chapel. But he opposed them, protesting against an honor of which he thought himself unworthy. When he found the privation too great, he allowed himself to be carried in a chair to the chapel and although the distance was short and he weighed less than the chair, he begged his bearers to forgive him the trouble he caused them.

Up to this time he had been able to endure his sufferings without giving any outward sign, but he was now so agonized that at times he cried out and his plaints grieved him more than the pain. He

could not move upon his mattress without intense anguish. To assist him, a cord had been fastened to the ceiling and to this he clung for support, as he changed his position. But even this simple movement racked him; when he hung thus desperately balancing at the end of the cord, you might have thought him a prisoner suspended by his hands and undergoing an investigation by torture.

"My Saviour, my Saviour," he breathed in so gentle a tone that he seemed thanking God for his martyrdom, rather than imploring that it should end. To cry out is not always an expression of self-pity. He never pitied himself and he did not wish others to do it. If it was done, he met it by accusing himself of selfishness and of caring too much for the blessings of this world!

"Wretched man that I am," he exclaimed, "who formerly allowed myself a horse, and rode in a carriage, and who now today (he glanced over the bare walls of his cell and at his fireplace) have a fire in my room and (striking his pallet as though he would beat it) a curtained bed! I have everything done for me. I lack nothing. What scandal, Messieurs and brothers, do I not give to the Company! And all this is done for the body of an old sinner, who one of these days will be placed in the earth and reduced to ashes over which you will walk!"

When he uttered these stern words, he was not one of those invalids who say such things without believing them. He made no pitiful reference to his approaching death. He had the belief that, "during the more than eighty years that God had allowed him to be on earth," he had abused God's goodness, and that His unexampled forbearance could not continue. The proof of this came out in his eagerness to use to the utmost the last moments of time allowed him.

On the 27th of August, a month before his death, he called his Daughters together to name a Superior to replace Mademoiselle Le Gras. He asked his household to forgive him the faults of which he had been guilty towards them, and any unhappiness he had caused them. Then would come one of his sudden lethargies, so complete that it was impossible to arouse him, and they would leave him as though he were in a trance. He held constantly the little wooden cross which never left his hands and which his eyes, even when

closed, seemed to seek. He still breathed but he appeared no longer to be of this world. Shadows, thoughts, memories seemed to glide over his face and caress its calm. He seemed to be buried in delightful thoughts; those near him and those looking in from the open door were struck with this look. If he were thinking, for the dying do think, much more than we imagine, when they have lost consciousness to exterior things and the inner life gathers its forces, of what could he have been thinking, if not of this wonderful life?

He studied his life, arid, like God who sees without reference to time, he saw it as a whole, in its general outlines as well as in the details, from the beginning to the end. It gave him his first touch with eternity. All that happened in his life-time passed before him, now seen' in the perspective of his destiny and no longer inspiring him, as formerly, with regrets, scruples, remorse, despair; but reassuring him, gladdening him, bringing before him the fruits of what he had planted, allowing him a taste now of the celestial honey gathered from the hive he had himself constructed. Disregarding his human judgment which was always too severe, he could now without sin, in the purest pride, felicitate himself and admire himself through God who commanded that he do justice to himself.

He saw himself at the time of his birth in the Landes, and then as a baby, sleeping and growing up; he saw the humble roof of his parents' home; felt their hands upon his cheek; saw their wrinkles, heard their voices; saw his sheep by the river Adour. Now he enters the Cordeliers, and then come his books and the Latin. He is a young man, a student, then a tutor, then a deacon, then, dazzling moment, a priest. And then, after a whirlwind of blood and fire, he is in the desert, a slave in Barbary thorny fig-trees, burning sands, dazzling azure sky; his turbaned masters, their wives; the Turkish wife on her knees, a victim of grace; the Super flumina. Then liberty; Rome and Paris, two worlds that no longer dismay him, whose outlines unfold themselves before his eyes as simply and as clearly as if they were Dax or Pouy.

He moves through all this as one quite at home. Every moment loved faces appear; they follow each other in their own costumes and with their own manners, all who have been in any degree a

part of his life. His "relatives" of twenty years, or of a day, here or elsewhere, pass before him, lay and ecclesiastical, people of the street, of the palace, of the towns, of the country, of all the places where he has worked, sowed seed, leaving many harvests, but gleaning only a few blades here and there for himself.

As the memories begin to crowd the number of persons increases, and they come to him in a disordered rush, the lower in rank often crowding out the higher. He recognizes them at first timidly as if he feared to offend them by showing too much pleasure, or lest the vision fade, for he is not sure whether he is awake or dreaming, or whether he really still lives. Soon the vision takes on such sharp reality that even in his fever he recalls to mind the names of these ghosts and gathers in the memories that their passing brings him: "Madame de Gondi, Monsieur le General! Madame de Maignelais! My old pupils! My masters! And you shepherds and plowmen! and all the princes, dukes, and great gentlemen who follow after the simple people and 'his families'!"

And behold, "there are my ministers, my chancellors, my captains, my marshals, my cardinals: Berulle, Retz, Richelieu, Mazarin! My prelates, garbed also in red, like my galley-slaves! And my artisans, my galley-sergeants, my nurses, my jailers what a splendid assembly! There, too, are my Queens, all three of them: Marguerite, whose chaplain I was; Madame Marie de Medici, at whose wedding I prayed; Madame Anne of Austria, who wished me to be her director. Excellent queens, generous rulers. You honored too greatly the humblest, the least of your subjects. I am abashed, I salute you. Ah, is it possible? Now my kings are passing! You, Henry the Third! Under your sad reign I was born, I first met you here. Ah, and you, my Henry of Navarre, my favorite! You received me, laughed with me, gayly told me things so good to hear; and then, grief stricken, I saw your dead, bearded face after Ravaillac and you, my pale King Louis, whose small hand I have held, when your father took you to pay your duty to Queen Marguerite; you who seventeen years ago died in my arms! And you, the Dauphin, who will be Louis XIV ah, all of you! and may the King of Kings on earth and in heaven bless you and now, that is all. After this, surely none could come. They all have come and gone. But no! What crowd is this drawing near? O my Lord, Thou forgettest nothing. Thy goodness is boundless,

ineffable. It covers me, crushes me. After all these favors Thou dost keep the greatest, the most precious for the end. There is Thy place; there art Thou borne and displayed. In all splendor Thou closest the procession. To overwhelm me with joy, Thou hast purposely kept as more worthy of Thy company the members of the Associations of Charity that Thou hast permitted me, in spite of the League and the Fronde, the wars and all calamities, to consecrate to Thy glory! And here they are our confraternities of men, of women, my excellent Daughters of Charity, my excellent Ladies, my excellent rich, my excellent poor, my missionaries in all places, exhausted by work, but unflagging in zeal; my priests, my confessors, my martyrs; and then my sick, my insane, my galley-slaves, my old men, my foundlings. If I have been able to do so much, and have never turned from it, it is because Thou hast given me, O Lord, the inspiration, the force, the means. My mission is fulfilled I come to Thee. Nunc dimittis!"

Those who listened anxiously for his breathing knew that beneath the silence Magnificats and Alleluias were being intoned. Suddenly he came back to full consciousness. When he opened his eyes such a look of joy shone in them that he might have been returning from heaven instead of preparing for it. Understanding from what a great vision he had awakened, he remarked, with his comprehending smile, "I am waiting for my sister." His sister was already near. She was now in the house, slowly and, as it were, regretfully climbing the stairway, pausing at each step. Every one was aware of her coming. She made no effort at concealment. They watched her.

It was on the twenty-seventh of September 1660 that she came to the place where Vincent had his little room. She found him there seated tranquilly in an arm chair. He was ready to go; he had received extreme unction. He saw her. Did the sight give him hope and joy? He had long expected her and even before she touched him his face turned from red to snow-white. They put his crucifix to his lips. He kissed it, murmured Confido, and then, very "simply and sincerely," died. It was his "little method." The clock struck four, his hour for rising.

After death his expression did not change nor did his body become

in the least rigid. "The surgeons who opened his body wondered greatly at a bone, like an ivory disk, that had formed in his spleen. Many who knew the servant of God believed that this strange formation was due to the violence with which he fought a certain deep and melancholy tendency which came from his nature and his temperament."

For two days Vincent's body lay in state, exposed to the view of all who came; he wore the skull-cap and little surplice that he had always worn in life. A crowd pressed in to see him, and his funeral was far from being the simple one he would have desired. "The whole life of Paris was stopped for that day, so great was the crowd that attended his obsequies." Monsieur the Prince de Conti, the Archbishop of Cesarea, the Papal Nuncio, a host of prelates, of lords and noble ladies, in whose front rank was the Duchess d'Aiguillon, were present in great pomp. Behind them, enveloping them, outnumbering them, were other noble groups: the good Daughters of Charity, the gentlemen of the Missions, the common people, and the poor, who had been the especial preference of the saint.

His heart was enclosed in a silver vase (he would have chosen lead himself), and his body was placed before the altar of the old Gothic church, the Church of the Lepers. Thus runs the inscription:

HIC JACET
VENERABILIS VIR
VINCENTIUS A PAULO PRESBYTER
FUNDATOR SEU INSTITUTOR
ET PRIMUS SUPERIOR GENERALIS
CONGREGATIONIS MISSIONIS
NEC NON PUELLARUM CHARITATIS
OBIIT DIE 27 SEPTEMBRIS ANNI l66o
AETATIS VERO SUM 85

The outburst of grief over his death was spontaneous and unanimous. There was public mourning. At Paris, at Reims, in other places, there were solemn requiems for him to which people went long distances, in order to hear the funeral oration of one who, in his life-time, had avoided all eulogy. Now that he was gone, the world would not be denied its praises. The Bishop of Puy,

Monseigneur Henri de Maupas du Tour, delivered at Saint-Germain-PAuxerrois a notable funeral oration on Vincent de Paul. At the end of two hours he was obliged to leave the pulpit with his oration unfinished, with the explanation that "the subject-matter was so ample he could have preached upon it for an entire Lenten season." He did not, however, fail to epitomize and beautifully characterize the work of Vincent de Paul with the remark: "He almost changed the aspect of the Church." In that sentence the word "almost" is. . . almost not needed.

The Opinions of the most eminent were heard on every side expressing the grief felt, or estimating the qualities of this noble and touching figure; there were several notaable pronouncements, as definitive as they were brief. Anne of Austria said: "The Church and the poor have suffered a great loss." The Prince de Conti declared: "I have never known greater humility, greater disinterestedness, or greater generosity of heart." Monseigneur Piccolomini, Papal Nuncio to France, said much the same. The Queen of Poland, the Marquis of Pianeze, the Bishops of Pamiers and of Aleppo; in short, every bishop, every priest, every one accustomed to the expression of such sentiments adopted, inevitably, an almost identical phrasing of the feeling felt for Vincent de Paul.

Even after his death Vincent, who was himself a model of modesty, seemed to inspire simplicity and brevity in those who spoke his praises. If he heard them, surely he was most touched by the grief of the poor who could only weep and cry: "We have lost our friend," and by the dark despair of the galley-slaves who midst their groans said: "We have lost our father." Those who in losing him lost most, and had most cause to weep, and yet knew it not, were the little abandoned children. In short, we may conclude with Bossuet: "There were many tears shed for him."

What He Left

The body of Vincent was said to have been buried beneath the choir of the church of Saint-Lazare. What happened to it in the course of time? Until 1712 it remained there in peace. In that year the coffin was opened and the body was discovered to be in a perfect state of preservation. In 1724 Benedict XIII issued a decree of Beatification for Vincent de Paul. The coffin was then taken up and placed in the church amidst imposing ceremonies presided over by the Bishop of Paris. Tapestries were hung on the walls, and there was a full illumination of the church, and splendid music; officials of the government and the court occupied the tribunes, the Queen of Spain sitting under a special canopy. The body was then returned to the crypt.

In 1729 the effects of an underground flood hastened the decomposition of the body which had begun after the exhumation of 1712, when it was exposed to the air. It was now necessary to remove the remains and, enclosed within a silver reliquary, they were placed on the altar of the chapel where in 1737, at the time of Vincent's canonization, they were again the center of signal honors. For fifty-two years they were the object of pilgrimages; the faithful venerated them, prayed there, asked for grace.

In 1789 the fury of revolution broke loose. The mob on the tenth of July had robbed the shops of the gunsmiths and forced an opening into the Hotel des Invalides. On the night of the twelfth they began the cry "To Saint-Lazare!" as they would on the morrow shout "To the Bastille!" A troop of bandits there were not more than two hundred, but for evil they were an army broke into the buildings of Saint-Lazare and gave them over to the most complete and savage destruction. Everything was smashed, torn down, stamped under foot, and broken into pieces; they flung out of the windows and carried off whatever seized their fancy.

The reliquary of solid silver that contained the relics of the Saint would be the first thing to attract the cupidity and hatred of a mob. There it was upon the altar, imprudently exposed; conspicuously placed and brightly shining, glittering with ornaments and

offerings; it had only to be seized, pulled down, hacked with axes, dishonored, profaned! And yet it escaped. Why? How? Was it chance, forgetfulness, haste, or a surfeit of rapine? Ignorance or a miracle? At least the fact remains. It was not touched.

In the accounts of the Disaster at Saint-Lazare and especially in the exact and detailed recital of Pere Lamourette, who was an eye-witness, not a word is said about the church or about the relics of Vincent. Yet everything connected with Vincent and the veneration of his remains was exactly suited to arousing the wrath of the mob. They attacked his statue; it had not been long completed, and it had been intended for the Louvre, that his features might be preserved for the world. There was a universal cry of rage and joy when the mob saw it. They pulled it down by force, tore off the hands, knocked off the head, and placing this on a pike they paraded this once august and gentle countenance through the streets, having mutilated and soiled it so that, broken nosed and dripping gore, it produced on the startled bystanders the effect of a human head freshly severed. Those who carried it last threw it with a laugh into the fountain of the Palais Royal. By that time it was no more than a lump of plaster.

At this same time the mob invaded his room. It was readily recognized since its poverty betrayed its association. The pallet of straw was there, the one on which he slept so little, and his rush chair, lame even as he was; hanging from a nail were the shabby garments shaped to the form of what he had called his "carcass"; there was the stiffened hat stained by his sweat, and the great mantle of Grandfather Stork in which so many babies had been carried; there were his heavy socks worn at the heels, the rosary that he had fingered, his breviary stuffed full of religious cards and showing his thumb-print on each page. In a corner was his stick, and on the table the rusty iron lamp, where there remained a bit of the oil that had lighted up his death-agony and whose wick had been extinguished at the moment of his passing all poor things but relics now which were kept there and carefully preserved, relics which spoke for and of him, before which prayers floated. All these poor objects were in turn torn, soiled, thrown in the mud.

Fortunately "the ark" was saved from the deluge; the reliquary was

left. In 1792 the Revolutionary government confiscated Saint-Lazare as national property, and the bones, placed in a box, were left in the office of a notary, who no doubt forgot about them, and there they remained until 1804. From 1804 to 1830 they were entrusted to the Sisters of Charity, first in the Rue du Vieux-Colombier, after 1815 in the Rue du Bac. In 1830 they were solemnly removed, again in a reliquary, to the Mother-House of the Mission in the Rue de Sevres. In 1909 the law separating church and state reached out for them and demanded banishment for them.

Where could they now be taken for safety? To Belgium. There, at least, in a neutral and peaceful country, safe from harm, nothing would disturb them. Then came 1914; Germany violated a soil and a country twice sacred. The Lazarist Fathers were able, even during the rigors of war, to cross the enemy lines with the reliquary. It reached England and it was not until 1919 that it came back to Paris, to the Rue de Sevres, where it is in its rightful place: on the altar of the Chapel of the Mission.

What a history! After persecution, revolutions, wars, flights through fire and water, under bombardment, by carriage, by army-wagon, by auto, by boat perhaps by aeroplane have the fragile remains of Vincent today found their humble shelter, their last resting place? They well deserve it. We should like to say with the old epitaph: Hie molliter ossa cubant in (Sternum! Cubant? Yes! May his bones indeed rest softly there. But in ceternum? What is this "eternity," what do we mean when we say "forever"? Nothing at all; there is nothing in common between us and eternity. After all, what matters the crumbling of this body of ours, which counts for so little? That which will never crumble, even when no particle of Vincent's dust shall remain, is his work, which is as living and as immortal as his memory.

Child of the soil and of our soil, shepherd for seventy years, priest, teacher, wise organizer and indefatigable missionary, sure and keen spiritual director, orator who stirred to the depths without using oratory, sublime, simple, familiar, writing and speaking the most wholesome and pure language, he wrought and achieved marvels in the realm of ideas, sentiments, and practical effort; and yet he remained always calm and confident, a master open to the

teachings of God. He stirred without agitating. He undertook everything and achieved everything. We must admire and venerate in him one of the glories of France. Let us canonize him as "our national saint." He is the pendant to Jeanne d'Arc. In short, he is one of those souls possessing the candor of the lily and the luster of gold, resplendent in love, that God has created, just as he adds an angel to Paradise or a star to the heavens, in memory of His Son, and that He sends down to earth among men to prove His existence.

About This EBook

The text of this ebook was taken from the book *The Heroic Life of Saint Vincent de Paul* described as A Biography by Henri Lavedan of the French Academy. The edition used, the first, was translated to English by Helen Younger Chase, and was published by Longmans, Green and Company of New York, New York in 1929.

It has the Nihil Obstat of Father Arthur J Scanlan, S.T.D., Censor Librorum, and the Imprimatur of Cardinal Patrick Hayes, Archdiocese of New York, New York, 26 February 1929.

The cover image is a detail of the Saint Vincent de Paul altar in the church of Saint Julien in Château-l'Évêque, Dordogne, France, date and artist unknown. It was photographed on 9 November 2009 by Père Igor, and the image swiped from Wikimedia Commons.

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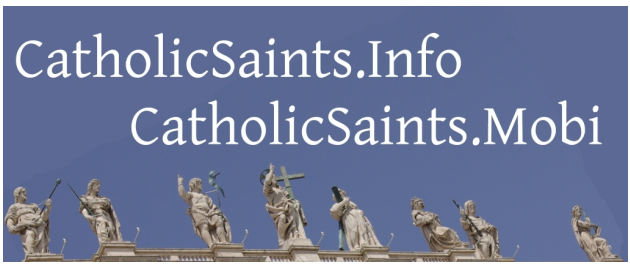
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